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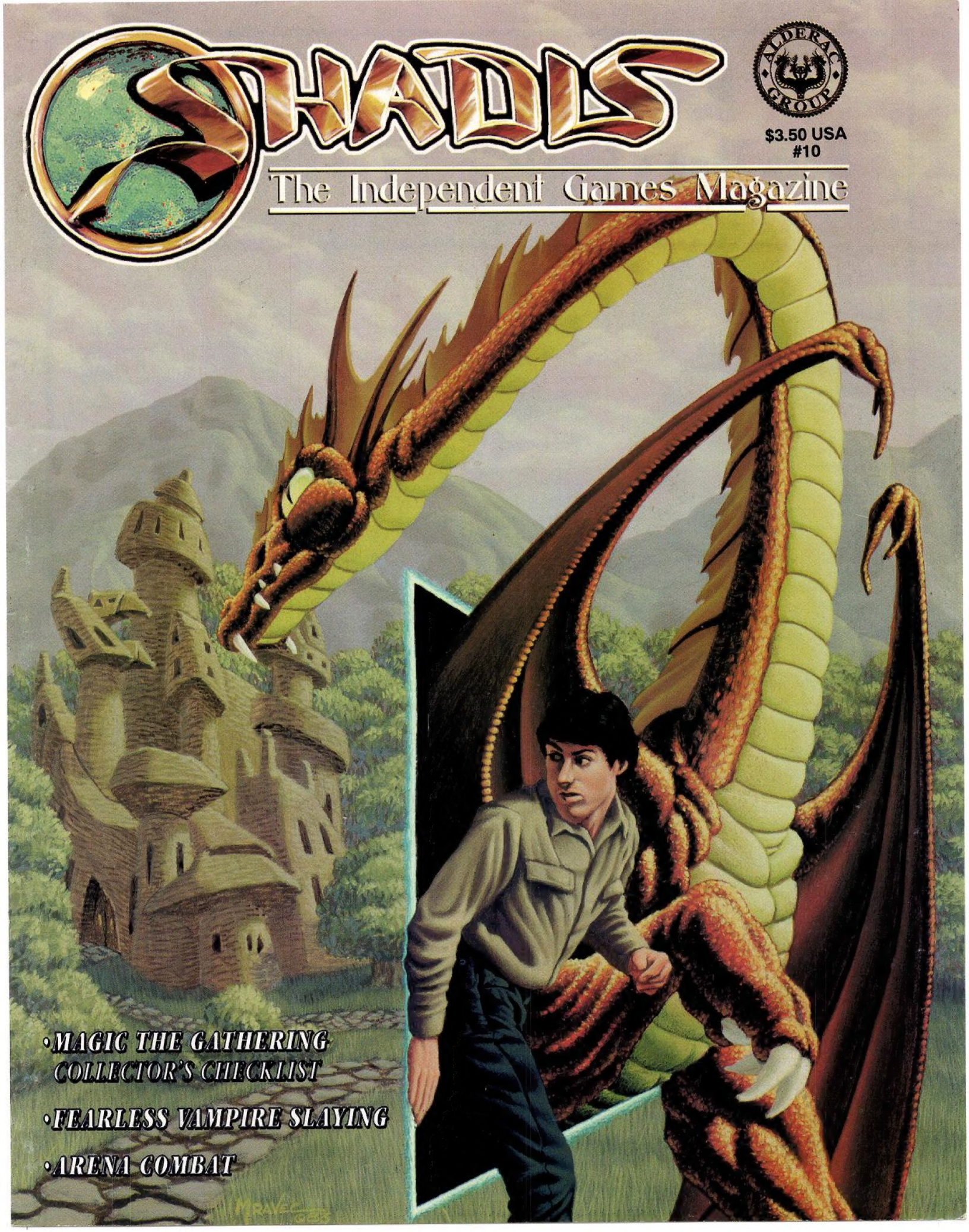

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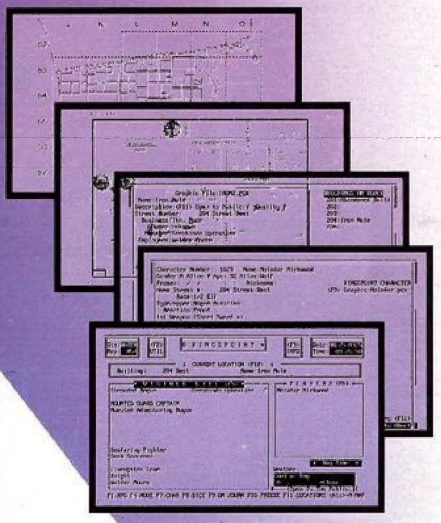

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Cries From the Attic

Editorial of a Madman

Klang....clop, clop, clop

I was talking to a reader the other day who had called to tell me how much he enjoyed our Hook, Line and Sinker scenarios. During our conversation he made an observation about my personal entries. He pointed out that a good portion of my adventure-seeds involved non-player characters who embrace the party but somehow interfere with or impede the players' progress. Simply put, the reader wanted to know why?

I thought about this for a while and I immediately determined the reason. A good, well-developed NPC is worth a thousand adventure plot-lines. When I first began playing role-playing games, my particular group was in a position to play almost nightly over the course of the summer. This posed a problem - as the GM, I had little if any preparation time to work up adventures.

My solution was to develop non-player characters who during the course of my ad-lib sessions, suggested adventures.

One of the those characters was a cowardly little thief nicknamed, "Klang...clop, clop, clop".

Bernie was his real name but he earned his title because, invariably, when the party met with imminent danger, Bernie would drop his sword (Klang!) and run away (Clop, Clop, Clop). Who could blame him? Bernie was a 1st level thief with 4 hitpoints. Though, the allure of gold was great, survival was foremost in his mind.

You would think the other party members would quickly turn Bernie into dragon bait. After all, Bernie was the first to run but always managed to show up later and beg for a share of the spoils. Bernie also had a bad habit of pick-pocketing his comrades. Once Bernie stole a magical ring and sold it. When his crime was revealed the angry party threatened to lynch him. Bernie, complete with tears, explained that his elderly mother was dying and that he needed the money to care for her.

The party, filled with compassion for their comrade's plight, secretly pooled together a large sum of money and made arrangements to assist the old woman. That's when they discovered Bernie's mother had been dead for 11 years. Somehow, the party could never bring itself to harm Bernie. As flawed as he was, he was fun to have around.

When Bernie was finally killed (he fled from a fight and ran right into the arms of a Cave Bear.) the party went to great expense to bury the thief, complete with a marble statue of his likeness. For years, newer players would ride past that statue on the edge of town and wonder at the inscription of "Klang Clop, Clop, Clop".

Another favorite NPC was a lowly leather-worker named Gandle. Gandle was a dwarf and originally was one of those throw-away NPCs pulled together for a random town encounter. Gandle was a stingy, tight-fisted merchant who would steal a dollar from his own mother.

As the most contrary character I've ever ran, it escapes me how he managed to win the hearts of the party. Eventually, the party rented Gandle's backroom (for a hefty fee of course). Soon after that, Gandle was hired on as a torch-bearer for the party and began adventuring with them. If Gandle happened to be killed, the party would make arrangements to have him resurrected.

When Gandle was cursed by a local cleric the party set out to avenge him. During the course of that mission the cleric was killed along with his innocent family. The party, filled with dread and guilt, was forced to burn the cleric's house to hide their crime. I don't think we realized the significance of the event at the time. Looking back, I have to smile. In a world filled with hack-n-slashers, here was a group of characters expending their hard earned gold and risking their lives for a lowly Non-player character.

I suppose many of my Hook, Line and Sinker scenarios are written with the hope that one of those NPC's will become a "Gandle" for someone else's campaign.

Jolly R. Blackburn
October 22, 1993

P.S. Good Reading! At 96 pages this is the biggest SHADIS ever!

The Letters Page

Our Readers Talk Back!

Due to space considerations, some letters have been edited. While letters of praise and 'atta-boy' are greatly appreciated, those containing constructive criticism, complaints and/or suggestions are more likely to see print. At any rate, keep those letters coming!

Greetings dear readers,

It appears that Jolly has let the task of answering our reader mail to Shad, my gnome assistant and myself. I must say with over 10,000 copies going out last issue, the mail is a little back-logged.

Instead of answering individual letters this time, I have compiled a list of the most frequently asked questions which I will answer once and for all.

Gameweaver

Just what does the name 'SHADIS' mean anyway?

GW: To answer that question, you must know a little background of the magazine. SHADIS was originally presented in a format that featured a rough 50-50 mix between gaming articles and fiction. The fiction that appeared in the early issues were all grounded in a common fantasy world called Alderac. Characters that appeared in one story - affected events and plot lines in other story lines. Anyway, one of the moons of Alderac was called SHADIS and was associated with a goddess by the same name. The goddess was associated with the art of writing and scribes and the moon had a two-month cycle. Thus, SHADIS seemed to be the perfect namesake for the magazine. Does that make sense?

I was looking at the dates on the back issues - why is there almost a year and half gap between issues 6 and 8?

GW: We get asked that question a lot. OK., here's the scoop. When Jolly founded the magazine in January, 1990, he was a Sergeant in the United States Army. Despite his military duties, Jolly was able to put out the first five issues on schedule! The problems started when Operation Desert Storm entered the picture. At that time, SHADIS was a one-man operation, so understandably the magazine's production schedule was put on hold.

Another Independent Games Magazine? What makes you guys think you'll be around long enough for me to risk a subscription?

GW: Good Question! Well, SHADIS has always been operated on a break-even policy and we have been publishing for three years. SHADIS was started with a fifty-dollar investment and every dollar produced has gone back into the magazine. SHADIS will survive because the owners are committed to its success. Jolly once told me that he would continue to publish SHADIS regardless of the size of its audience.

I love the Market Platz - but what are those cryptic messages under Matrix Gaming?

GW: Veteran readers of Shadis will recall that a PBM game was presented in Issue no.#6 based in the fantasy milieu of Alderac.

The editor's original idea was to run the game free to Shadis subscribers. However, the poor fool bit off more than he could chew.

When the number of players surpassed 100, Jolly found that he was spending more time moderating the PBM game than working on the magazine itself. Although the game was very popular, Jolly was forced to shut it down. The idea never died, however, and playtesting has been ongoing since. Hence, the cryptic messages.

We've decide to leave Play-by-Mailing to the professionals and take a different approach.

A new system has been developed based on Chris Engle's Matrix Game rules. (See issue no.#6) Chris has volunteered to help out as a consultant.

I'm sworn to silence and have told too much already. There will be more about this exciting development in Issue no.#11. I can tell you that participation will be free to subscribers and that playtesters are having a blast.

Will my local gamestore carry SHADIS?

GW: We certainly hope so! Every major game distributor is now carrying SHADIS. If your local gamestore doesn't have us on the shelves you can do two things to help us.
1. Ask the owner to carry the magazine. and
2. Send us the address and/or phone number of the store so we can rush them our promotional packet and a copy of the magazine.

Do you accept unsolicited articles and artwork?

GW: Yes! In fact we encourage our readers to submit their material. SHADIS has always been a grass-roots endeavor and we are striving to keep that feel to the magazine. You can send an SASE for our Writers/ Artists Guidelines.

If I hold a copy of SHADIS over a hot flame will it burn?

GW: No, due to a strange magical aura that surrounds the magazine it will not burn. At least that's what I've been told. ❑

ONE WAY
Nene 9/93

Fearless Vampire Slaying

All You Need to Know about Ridding the World of these Monstrous and Malign Creatures of Vile Darkness

By Gary Gygax © 1993
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Myth and legend are filled with various kinds of vampires with all manner of strange and terrible powers. Accompanying such tales there is usually provided information as to special means to warding them off as well as the special ways which are the only methods of destroying such monsters permanently. In these regards I will seek to explain in role-playing game terms how it is all possible. That is, using as a model the vampire as described in Central and Eastern European folklore, we will consider how it can exist and what makes certain of its powers possible, and then examine the reputed vulnerabilities of such demoniacal creatures.

What created the first vampire? This is a very valid question. We assume that this form of monster is, at the very least, able to infect others with the curse of undeath and the mindless demand to periodically slay the living by drinking their blood. Even allowing for, but a single progenitor of all others, how did the very first one come into being? It had to start somewhere. There can be no doubt that the first vampire achieved this condition through some form of demonic pact. Such a condition would be eminently satisfactory to those of the nether realms, for to exist in undead state the vampire would perforce spread its evil through the world. In fact, the end result should be a growing mass of blood-sucking fiends which would eventually wipe out all humanity. This in turn would cause them to perish for want of their sustaining fluid, and thus pack the netherhells full of souls. Assured victory for the forces of evil!

Yet with the powers of vampirism come a number of weaknesses. Those susceptibilities are the saving of mankind and the doom of the demonic. To assert that vampires are not affected by the various warding things and do not possess weaknesses is to fly in the face of reason. Obviously, were it not so, no human would remain alive, nor any vampire either. Now we might expect to hear the argument that the blood-sucker can control the passing on of its curse, that the vampire can select which victim is to merely die, which to be tainted with undeath. That might be so, but to assert such control limits the spread of vampirisim is utter nonsense.

"With the powers of vampirism come a number of weaknesses. Those susceptibilities are the saving of mankind and the doom of the demonic"

Consider the differences in individuals. Accepting as a given that the curse of vampirisim limits drastically the normal range found in humans, there are still sufficient peculiarities and similarities to bring about the condition spoken of earlier, the destruction of human life. A male vampire seeks female converts and numbers of them. Would then a female vampire not likewise seek to expand her experience? The answer is plain. In this manner alone, assuming, but three new vampires created in a century of each vampire's existence, with new "converts" being made only in the first decade of undeath, we have an exponentially growing infestation. Allowing for the creation of the first vampire to have become active in the early middle ages, this gives us ten centuries, 100 decades. In the first these are but four of three creatures, but by the second decade there are now 13. The nine new ones create 27 more by the third decade of the first century, and those 27 have made 81 additional vampires by the fourth decade. Simple arithmetic shows that a critical stage is soon reached. No, the vampire is vulnerable to many things, or else its kind would have extinguished humanity and itself long ago.

With that matter settled, it is time to examine these foul creatures' potential.

First of all, let us consider what it is that makes a vampire what it is. How can one no longer living remain undecayed and quick? There can be but a single answer. It is the bestowal of some evil energy originating from the nether realms. This negative force is part of the unseen energy which pervades the cosmos. It is that which enables magic. There exists in all things at least some of this stuff. In the mundane world it is of mixed, positive and negative, sort. In the higher planes it grows ever more positive in nature, while in the nether ones it becomes ever more negative. There are many names for the energy, but that used by the ancient Egyptians seems best suited for employment in explaining magical power. Their word for it was *heka* (pronounced HEE-ka), and hereafter I will use this term when speaking of the unseen energy of the multiverse.

Thus we must accept that the enabling force which keeps vampires from decay, motivates muscles and nerves, enables their intellect, such as it is, to remain active is negative heka power. This vitalizing energy likewise causes these demoniacal things to be virtually immune to most injuries. Trauma which would harm or kill a living human is nothing to these creatures of darkness because the negative heka acts to restore their form to the state in which it was when the power

initially entered the body. Think of it in this way: The negative heka is a container and the body water filling it. The "container" is very strong, so few things break it. Likewise, it is very encompassing, so there is little chance that the "water" it holds will be spilled or otherwise lost. Strike the water, and it returns almost instantly to its former state. Pierce it, and the liquid is unaffected. (We'll return to this in a bit. . .). Drop the container full of water and its resiliency causes it to suffer the fall and impact generally unscathed. Should it suffer damage, with or without loss of content, infusion of additional negative heka will repair the vessel, and refill the liquid.

Is there more to a vampire than its negative energy and physical body? Of course. Just as humans consist of body, mind, and spirit, so too is the vampire tripartite. It retains a mental faculty as well as a strong and malignly vile spiritual one. Each must be considered.

The mind of the vampire no longer functions as does the human one. It has no true reasoning power such as that which it possessed when it achieved its cursed state. It can remember, of course. The perverted intellect of these creatures gives them seeming reason and memory which combine so as to enable them a great *cunning*. Reason can not assail it, and the vampire has no doubts or fears. It might scheme, but it does not think *per se*.

The spirit of the monster is the adhesive which keeps the vessel of its physical form intact. It's spiritual component is not so unassailable as the mental one. The dark and evil power of the vampire's being grows greater as it continues to feed on the lives of its victims. This is granted in order to drive the creature on to greater deeds of evil. Despite such power, the vampire is also made vulnerable by its spirit. No conscience disturbs the creature, but the spirit can comprehend what it has become, and before such it quails. Put another way, the spirit of the vampire can be harmed. If it is destroyed, then the vampire is nothing but a zombie bound to physically degenerate, corrupt, and become dust in time-be it in days, weeks, or months. (The possession of such a body by a demonic "walk-in" is possible, but such consideration is not germane in this treatment.)

The vampire is kept in its condition of undeath by negative heka. Its physical form is regenerated quickly by the force of this heka. Its cunning is intrinsic and exists until the vampire is destroyed. The spirit of the monster is likewise restored by the power of the nether energy. Knowing all this, one might well wonder how such a demonic thing can be stopped. So let us now return to what we started at the beginning of this treatment. In order to retain this capability, the monstrous thing must drink human blood.

Why? Well, it is said that life is in the blood. This is true in many ways. Blood conveys nutrients and oxygen, carries away waste, bears defense mechanisms throughout the body. It does more. Blood circulates heka energy too. In the mundane physical body this power is a mixture of positive and negative, therefore not too efficient, but very necessary. It is the heka in the victim's blood which the vampire requires, not merely the physical matter it must have. Certainly, the demonic creature must have fresh blood to circulate throughout the body, but the power from the ingestion of the liquid is the heka. Because the vampire is not living, its physical body no longer manufacturers blood. Without such substance the heka can not move freely through the body, and the vampire's physical form degenerates. Fresh blood filling the veins and arteries is necessary to maintain the monster's physical well being. Even though it does not circulate, the mere presence of it facilitates the flow of heka along it. Before the in-taken blood can putrefy, the action of the negative energy coursing through out it destroys it. Thus the vampire must continually renew the stuff by drinking the life of humans.

Certain things ward off a vampire. Most notably water as well as the home (until the monster is allowed or invited inside) and hallowed ground. Certain things harm a vampire, to whit: garlic, mirrors, blessed liquid, and religious symbols. Finally, some few things destroy the vampire, namely exposure to full sunlight and a wooden stake driven through the heart (accompanied thereafter by severing the head, and filling of the vampire's mouth with blessed food [such as holy waters], and possibly thereafter a total destruction of the remains by incineration).

Negative ions are indicative of positive heka energy. Running water generates negative ions and thus is an attractant to positive heka. Positive heka is destructive to the vampire. Worse still, a current of such energy both combines with it and sweeps away some of the negative. The onslaught so weakens the vampire as to trap it in there. The monster dare not cross for fear of being caught and exposed to sunlight thereafter. Of course, bridges weaken the heka stream and enable crossing of running water.

What is it about the inviolate household which wards off one of these vile creatures? Why cannot the vampire enter until allowed? There can be no intrinsic protection in a mere physical construction. The warding, in fact, assumes the dwelling has been ceremonially endowed, such as in a blessing of a home, with positive force of heka which acts as a shield against those utilizing negative heka only. It is probable that a very powerful vampire, as well as most any demon, could break through such a barrier.

Hallowed ground is likewise imbued with strong positive force. This heka not only wards off but also harms the negative-only creature or being. If then we have a religious edifice surrounded by hallowed ground, the warding is very strong, for with consecration and blessing the endowed positive heka is likely sufficient to destroy any vampire or demon foolish enough to attempt to force its way through such protections.

The efficacy of garlic cannot be doubted. What, though, in a simple herb can so harm a dreaded demonic thing? It is a simple matter actually. Garlic is both a positive heka source and one of health. Its heka and physical substances, includ-

ing an antibiotic, purify the blood and endow it with positive energy while annihilating the negative. The vampire, of course, has negative heka only in the blood it contains. The act of drinking the victim's blood does two things in regards to the vitality in this fluid. First, the mixed energies are polarized to produce separate forms of blood. Next the vampire either drains off only that portion which is negative, or else must expend some energy of his own to neutralize and convert the remainder to the negative state. Certainly this is why vampires prefer to take their victim by serial attack, slowly drawing off the nether-source heka-filed blood without having to expend their own power to enable them to take all of it at once.

Close proximity to garlic harms the vampire physically through the loss of negative heka because of the herb's positive energy. Ingestion, of course, multiplies this effect. Furthermore, the natural healing forces in the garlic act upon the blood with the vampire, sending antitoxins into it, creating positive heka, destroying negative in the process, and making the blood no longer an efficient vehicle for the distribution of the energy through the vampire's physical form.

The aversion of vampires to mirrors has nothing to do with the physical-other than secondarily. That is, the cunning mind of these creatures recognizes that their lack of reflection will reveal their vile nature to a human onlooker, so they shun them in this regard. Why do vampires cast no reflection? It is polarization, of course. Despite having a physical form visible to us, they have no reflected image, because the mirrors cannot reflect light which is subject to heavy negative heka interference. This is why one becoming a vampire casts only a transparent, ghostly reflection, as well as why a weakened monster of this sort might well show a shadowy form in a mirror. There is some modicum of positive heka within such creatures, and that enables light reflection in the mirror.

What the presentation of a mirror to a vampire does to it is spiritual. Reflections exist on many planes and from many sources, not merely on the mundane as regards light. The vampire's form is reflected back to it on the ethereal plane by that radiation. This enables the monster to observe its own *spiritual* form in the mirror. Having been once human, such a sight is destructive to the semi-human spiritual portion of the vampire. It suffers damage to its soul, as it were, from seeing what it has become. Forced to endure such a sight for an extended period would cause the evil creature to be destroyed. Its spirit would be annihilated, wrenched from the physical, and be sent gibbering into the darkness of the nether realms forever. Is it a wonder then that such creatures react violently to mirrors? Not at all.

Blessed liquids, such as holy water, are imbued with strong positive heka. Contact with such substances harm the physical body of the vampire. It is as simple as that. Ingested, the liquid contacts more of the physical body and the blood as well, possibly releasing positive heka into the ethereal also, thus damaging the spiritual form of the monster. Such blessed liquids are indeed anathema to demonic things in general and vampires in particular.

Those religious symbols which have been properly blessed contain a potent charge of positive heka. Then if they were specially consecrated first, the force is much greater. Their nature enables such symbols to deliver both physical damage and spiritual harm, so they are highly efficacious. Yet we know that without faith on the behalf of a human wielding such, these items have no warding effect. That isn't exactly true. They do have effect, but it is limited to the sort of energy within the object in question. Great holy relics alone are indeed sufficient to severely harm vampires-demons for that matter. Even simple ones are sufficient to turn these demoniacal things away if the warded individual or individuals have childlike faith or are innocent and unaware (such as a sleeper). Only if the object is removed or screened can the vampire be safe from its potency in such cases.

With regard to faith, the matter is not complex. The blessed symbol is a channel for the flow of heka. If the object represents the higher spheres, then the energy which can be channeled through it is positive. Even holy symbols of Nature have efficacy in this regard, for albeit their heka is mixed, the stream of positive and negative is partially baneful to vampires. The faithful welder knowingly or unknowingly directs such energy against the vampire, thus inflicting both spiritual damage and severe physical harm if the object contacts the vampire's form. Destruction of these monstrous things is not possible, however, by employing symbolic items of this nature. At best their power can reduce the vampire to a state of neutral sort, in which it is spiritually powerless and physically harmed, but otherwise held in a sort of stasis. Only two sure means of permanent and total destruction of vampires are known.

Why only two? Other forms of harm to these monstrous creatures might indeed destroy the spiritual portion of the vampire, sending it's human soul off to

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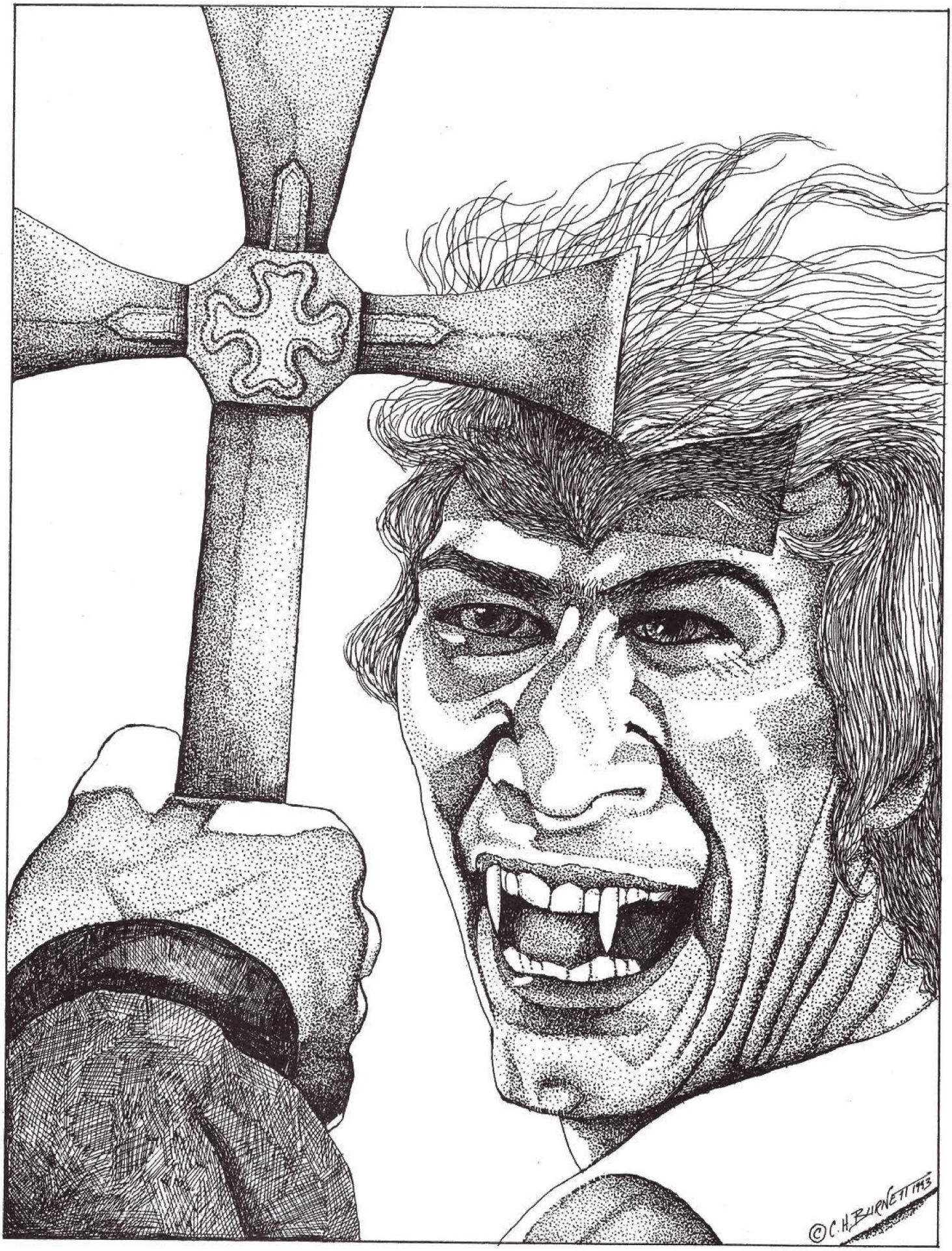
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darkness. However, this is most unfortunate, as it invites evil spirits to inhabit the physical body left behind. In short, one removes a preternatural menace only to cause the creation of a supernatural one!

When a vampire suffers exposure to full sunlight, the combined ultraviolet radiation conveys very strong positive heka on several planes. That is, the energy in the sunlight affects the physical body of the monster and the spiritual one as well. Given sufficient exposure, the two meaningful portions of the vampire are annihilated forever. However, if any scrap of the physical form is shaded and not destroyed thus, that bit will be sufficient to allow the spirit to linger. The tie holding the two parts there strengthens as the negative heka of darkness regenerates the physical body of the creature not fully destroyed. In but a single night, the wounded but restored monster will again walk.

The surest procedure for the destruction of such monsters is also the best known. That is a wooden stake driven through the heart. Wood is another vegetable substance containing positive heka. In this case it is of no great power, but its location is key. The nexus for the flow of negative energy through the vampire's body is there, at the heart. The act of driving the stake into that place paralyzes the vampire by stopping the necessary movement of negative heka. It alone does *not* destroy the creature. Left thus, the physical body deteriorates to a certain extent, slowly, but never permanently. The spirit remains tied to the remains. Remove the stake and regeneration begins, just as described previously in regards to exposure to direct sunlight. Once the vampire is made powerless by the insertion of the stake through its heart, then other steps must be taken so completely annihilate it.

Held immobile, the head of the monster must be severed to further disrupt the potential for the flow of negative energy. Then the mouth of the monster must be filled with a blessed substance of positive heka nature [food substance blessed, such as holy wafers]. Then the body of the thing must be sprinkled with blessed liquid [such as holy water] or rubbed with like oil. These steps weaken the tie between physical and spiritual components of the vampire. Finally, once the sun is risen, the separated parts of must be laid upon a pyre of wood, burned until totally incinerated. The ashes and any remaining bits of bone must then be scattered in water, preferably running water, but a large body of relatively still water (pond, lake, sea) will do as well. The few bits of physical matter remaining are insufficient to link the spirit, as the water serves to break the last bond. The vampire is expunged. We can all rest easier.

Knowing all of this, here are a few questions of unusual sort pertaining to the vulnerabilities of vampires:

What would a long-acting hemotoxin do to a vampire? Weaken it severely in physical form, but not destroy it? The negative heka force would eventually restore the monster as the poison degenerated and became inert.

What would leukemia do to a vampire? The leukocytes in the blood could not live and reproduce in the body of a vampire. Ingestion would cause physical harm at first, but the cells would rapidly be destroyed, and the monster would regenerate and no longer be affected unless new ones were introduced.

What would AIDS do to a vampire's regenerative systems? Nothing. Negative heka, not the body organs, keep the vampire whole, sound, and quick. No disease will have any long-lasting impact on such a monster.

What would happen to a lycanthrope inflicted with vampirism? The two conditions are mutually exclusive in this case. That is, the living body of the therianthrope, wolf-man or otherwise, must be functioning in order to be subject to such change. If somehow made into a vampire, the former condition would disappear and the latter one would prevail. This is not to say, however, that the vampire would not then be able to shape-shift. That ability in vampires is enabled by negative heka, not such substance playing upon natural organs and body tissue.

Would ultra-violet [tanning] lamps have the same effect as sunlight upon the vampire? No, because these lights do not contain all of the radiation of natural sunlight. However, strong ultraviolet light does carry sufficient positive heka to inflict some considerable physical harm to such a monster.

What about other radiation of the "hard" sort such as X-rays? In general, such radiation alone is not harmful to a vampire.

Would a vampire's reflection be seen in water? No, nor from any light-reflecting surface as explained for the mirror.

Would sacramental wine harm a vampire? Yes, assuming it was a blessed liquid, it would be the same as holy water, for example.

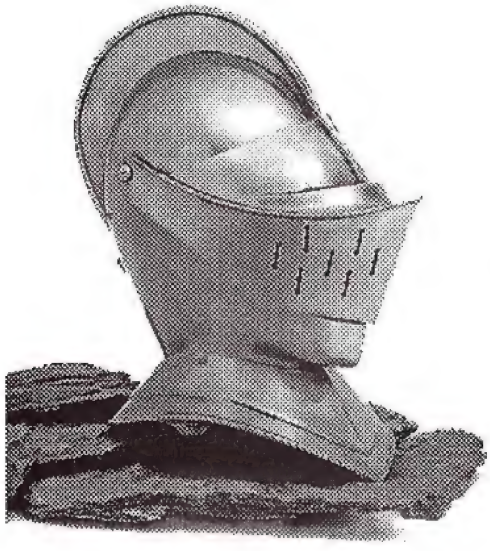
What about vestments of a priest? Would their touch affect a vampire? Yes, in the same manner as does the touch of blessed liquid.

What about an altar cloth? Yes, as does holy water, for instance; and, if it were both blessed and consecrated the altar cloth would be doubly damaging to a vampire. The same is true of any holy book or similar object.

Does the soft iron nail cross or X-shape truly repel vampires as it does witches? Yes, for it contains a fairly strong charge of positive heka. If the nails are further imbued with the positive energy, they become more potent still.

Is there anything in iron which is effective against vampires? The pure metal has some small heka within it, but it is not effective. The same is true of all metals, although some have no positive heka at all and so are even less harmful to these monstrous things.

What about acid, lye, fire, and the like? Such things do harm the physical form of the vampire, but not for long! With the spirit free to act, the monster quickly shifts from the physical to the ethereal sphere and escapes from the damaging substance. If unable to do so, it is possible that the vampire would be completely destroyed, provided that every last portion of the physical was absolutely gone, a non-too-likely event. Because the spirit would still be strongly tied to the physical component, any bit left could eventually be regenerated to restore the monster to its former state. ❑



Company Profile:
Museum Replicas Limited

By Barbara Blackburn

True adventurers know how important a battle-ready sword, dagger, axe, shield or helmet can be. Hank Reinhardt knows too. Producing museum-quality replicas is his trade, as well as his love. After stumbling across a catalog for his company, Museum Replicas Limited I called Hank, who is the vice president to find out more. To my surprise, Hank invited me to his home near Atlanta, Georgia to see his 'collection'. I spent a Saturday afternoon in awe as I was led from one room to another where there were enough swords and pieces of armor to outfit a small army. Every room of Reinhardt's home in Atlanta is packed with authentic weapons, armor and shields that would make a museum curator green with envy.

At first, I was under the impression that all of the weapons were authentic. Then I realized that many of them were replicas from Mr. Reinhardt's company. It was really difficult to tell the difference. My visit quickly became a ritual of asking "Is this one real?"

Reinhardt, a charming man of 59, I discovered, is an expert on historic weapons and armor. He owns a vast collection of reference literature on the subject and uses his expertise to make a living. Under his guidance, Museum Replicas Limited produces replicas of armor of weapons and just about anything a well-outfitted warrior might need. From a two-hand Scottish claymore, an armet helmet, cloak, boots or mace, Museum Replicas offers it all. Their 59 page, full-color catalog is filled with items that would interest any gamer.

Although Museum Replicas is primarily aimed at history buffs, the last section of the catalog features fantasy gear. Those who don't mind sacrificing authenticity, can find such things as a fantasy horned helmet, dragon's claw sword, or a fire-breathing dragon lamp. Reinhardt said that the interest in fantasy weapons has been enough that his company plans to split into two divisions. *Museum Replicas* will still replicate original masterpieces, while the new division, *Warriors Dream*, will focus on fantasy items. It is hoped that licensing agreements can be obtained to allow Warrior's Dream to draw from such science fiction fantasies as Flash Gordon and the works of Robert Heinlein. Reinhardt has been a science fiction fan since he was a child.

Reinhardt's customers range from die-hard re-enactors such as those who belong to the *Society for Creative Anachronism*, to theatrical groups. Movies like *Highlander*, and *Robin Hood* featured replicas from Reinhardt's company as well.

"It's surprising the number of people who say they've always wanted a real sword to hang on their wall," Reinhardt said.

Reinhardt has more than a few "real swords" hanging on his walls. Every room overflows with hands-on history lessons. His oldest piece is a Roman spear head from about 380 B.C. His pet weapon is a swept-hilt rapier dating from about 1580.

"Historic swords like these are investments," Reinhardt said. "They go up in value by an average of 15 to 20 percent per year. There are fewer and fewer swords and more and more people wanting them. Museums buy a lot and then stick them in their basements to rust," he added in disgust.

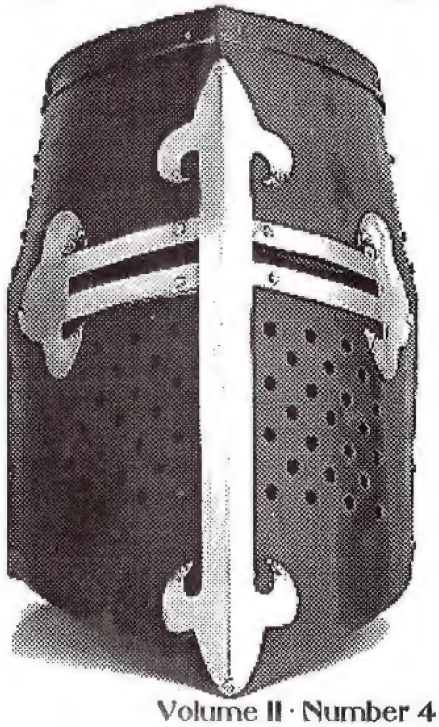
Reinhardt used to be a safety engineer, which required him to travel a great deal. After his wife was killed in an automobile accident, he was left to raise two daughters as a single father. Because he couldn't travel anymore, he had to find another way to make a living.

He talked with a friend who shared his interest in ancient weapons and they started their business in 1985 and did well.

One reason for the success of the business is Reinhardt's vast knowledge of Medieval and Ancient civilizations and their ways of fighting and living.

Reinhardt has travelled the world researching his interest and has collected a vast library of reference books about bladed weapons and armor of the world. He finds blatant errors in most every Hollywood movie production, when it comes to depicting Medieval times.

"It disgusts me to see these errors. Choreographers have no idea how swords were used. Take Star Wars. The light sabre duels were based on 18th century fencing techniques. The light



sabres would have been most efficient by thrusting, but instead, the duelists draw the weapons way back and swing."

If you question his expertise on the subject, you should know that Reinhardt is often contracted to train police officers in the use of blade weapons in hand-to-hand combat. He also speaks at numerous conventions around the country on the use of ancient weapons.

Reinhardt complains that Hollywood has never gotten it right when it comes to ancient history.

"The recent Robin Hood was one of the worst as far as historical accuracy is concerned. Here is this black Moor running around England and openly practising Islam. He would have been burned at the stake immediately!

"Another common error in movies depicting the time period is they dress everyone in drab clothing. People who lived in the Middle Ages dressed colorfully. Their world was drab, but they didn't wear drab clothing."

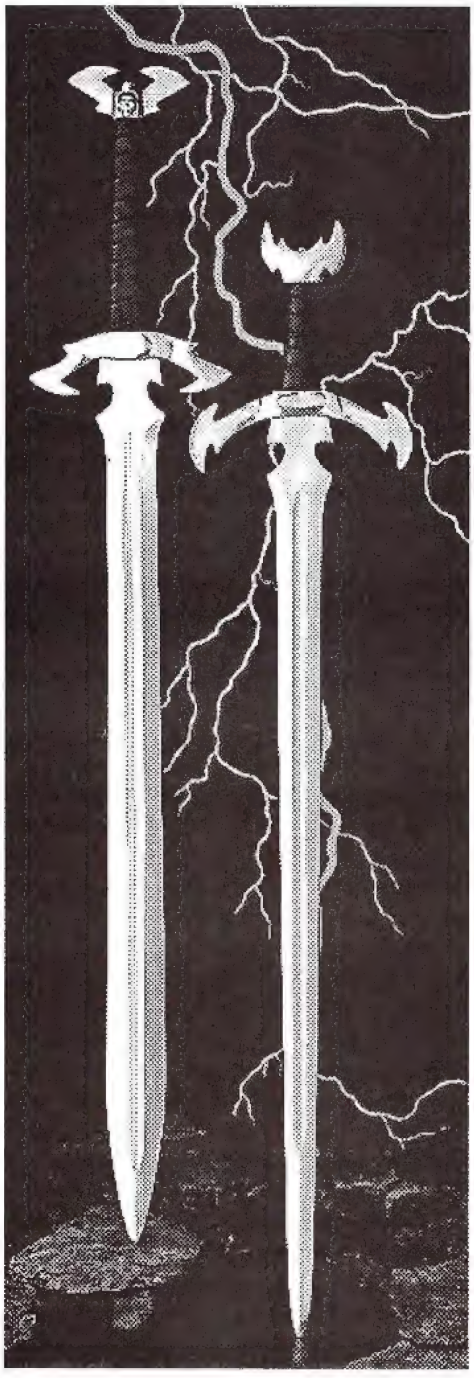
Reinhardt also said that most role-playing games contain blatant errors when describing weapons. He said the fault for this lies in the fact that most reference books on weapons rely on a book called "British and Foreign Arms and Armour" which was written by a man who knew little about the subject and fabricated information.

"People kept buying this book and referencing it and it became gospel. The author invented a lot. He made up time periods for weapons that didn't even exist." Reinhardt said. "For one thing, despite this book's claim, you will never find a double-headed axe until well into the Renaissance, used in the Middle East. This book claims Vikings used them.

"Another blatant error is that the book attributes the invention of mail to the Arabs in the 10th century. Mail was more probably invented by Celts around 700 to 800 B.C."

According to Reinhardt, these inaccuracies have been incorporated into most of the fantasy role-playing games on the market. He feels the most accurate source book on the subject ever written

"They (swords) are not toys made for antiquarians to play with and marvel over. They are weapons. They were made to kill young men in battle. And they did their job very well."



was "The Archeology of Weapons" by Ewart Oakshott, published in 1960. The book is now out of print and extremely difficult to find. Reinhardt proudly showed me his copy and revealed that he had acquired the rights to reprint it. "It is the single best reference book on the subject anywhere!," he emphasized.

After noticing my admiration for an authentic two-handed sword hanging on one wall, Reinhardt pulled down some photographs taken from the excavation of a Medieval battlefield in England. Among them were the skeletal remains of fallen soldiers which had been buried in a mass grave. This particular battle, Reinhardt explained, was fought on a sweltering day. Normally the armor and weapons would have been stripped from the dead. By the time the bodies were retrieved from this battle, the stench was so bad that the armor was left on.

Pointing to one picture of a skeleton with both legs cut off above the knees, Reinhardt shook his head. "This guy probably lived for several agonizing minutes from that wound."

"When speaking of swords, you have to remember this, they are not toys and they weren't made for modern antiquarians to play with and marvel over. They are weapons. They were made to kill young men in battle. And they did their job very well."

With that sobering reminder my visit with Hank Reinhardt ended. He hinted that he might be persuaded to write a historical article for SHADIS on weapons and armor and I intend to follow up on that. In the meantime, if you would like to see such an article let us know.

If you haven't seen a copy of Museum Replicas Limited's catalog I highly recommend it. Be forewarned, however, you'll likely be spending many nights pouring over the pages and making a wish list. ❑

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE ANY OTHER COMPANIES PROFILED, LET US KNOW!

Magic: The Gathering

From Game to Obsession in 0.4 Hours

A Review & Compendium

by Alan Emrich

Editor's Note: There's a strange affliction sweeping the gaming community. We've been referring to it as "Magic Fever". The first signs were evident at GENCON last August, but the staff of SHADIS really saw the epidemic proportions of this phenomena at GATEWAY in Los Angeles a month later. It was nothing short of madness. We've never quite seen anything like it in the hobby. Some claim it is the most innovative game since D&D hit the scene. Others have passed it off as a fad that will quickly subside. No matter what your opinion of the game, you have to admit - Magic Fever has hit in a BIG WAY and it's attracting people who normally don't play fantasy games.

JRB

I have seen very few instances of actual player frenzy at a game convention. Sure, some games, like Pit or Pax Britannica, use it as a design feature, but none of these artificial bouts with chaos has ever been able to carry a game for long on my list of favorites. Recently, however, one new game has transcended the gaming barrier of simulated chaos to reek actual havoc on the gaming hobby as we know it. If Alfred Hitchcock were a gamer, this is just the sort of situation that would make him smile.

And what is this giant of a game that generated countless telephone calls to stores depleted of it from August to October? This colossus that has stores screaming at their distributors who, in turn, are upping orders with its manufacturer at a dizzying pace? Why, you'll find it in an innocuous little box, only slightly larger than a normal deck of cards. This size makes sense, though, since Magic: The Gathering is, at its heart, a charming little card game.

The Glasses of Urza

Designed by Richard Garfield (Ph.D., of Garfield Games) and distributed through the Herculean efforts of Wizards of the Coast (the left coast, that is, in the State of Washington), with the purchase of a deck of Magic: The Gathering cards, one unwittingly finds that they have suddenly been thrust into the hottest commodities market in the gaming hobby today. That is because each deck purchased consists of 60 cards and a tiny, 36-page rules booklet. However, these 60 cards will only constitute a fraction of the approximately 300 different cards available in Magic: The Gathering, the first in a series of Deckmaster series games. In fact, some cards are common, while others are uncommon or rare in their frequency of appearance. Therefore, no purchaser is likely to get exactly the same deck of cards twice, as their assemblage has been randomized.

This playing-cards-as-trading-cards idea is not a new one to me. Fifteen years ago, while working with those creative guys at Eon Products (the inventors of Cosmic Encounter), their next project was going to be a "trading card game where you took an opponents card when you won, just like marbles." That idea disappeared with Eon, I thought, until I ran across Magic: The Gathering at the Origins '93 convention in Dallas. There, Wizards of the Coast demonstrated the game from their booth, promising that the cards were being delivered from Belgium soon. Since I buy almost every novel card game that comes my way, I ordered a dozen decks on the spot and waited to see whether or not I had just flushed $100 away.

The Black Vise

Each of the different playing/trading cards in Magic: The Gathering is beautifully illustrated by an outstanding fantasy artist. Names like Mark Poole, Richard Thomas, Amy Weber, Dan Frazier, Dameon Willich and many others abound on the illustration copyrights that appear on the bottom of every card. It is the beauty of their artwork, illustrating the various items and spells in this game of dueling wizards, that makes for its good "first impressions" with the uninitiated. Once they see the cards in growing numbers spread out on the table, they invariably comment upon the outstanding artwork. This, and the sight of those playing it having so much fun, makes it oh-so-easy to get them to sit down a try a game. In fact, "Magic: The Converts" is a common occurance among regular players who seem to have little problem coaxing beginners to try the game.

Generally, Magic: The Gathering is played as a duel between two wizards (players), each of whom is trying to cut down the other's 20 "life points." Each wizard plays with their own unique deck that can be custom assembled by its owner to optimize its strength. In other

words, one can buy a few decks of cards, or supplement a deck with booster packs, then cull down that collection of cards to create a very specifically designed deck (or decks). Since each player should be making up their own decks to compete with, it's better to find someone else with a deck, rather than providing one of your spare ones for them.

To the victor, also, goes the spoils since, at the beginning of each game, both players are required to ante one randomly selected card. This ante of two (total) cards is then kept by the winner of the game. There is no anguish like losing a rare card to a lucky adversary (nor a thrill like winning one). As we learned from Paul Newman in The Color of Money, "Money won is twice as sweet as money earned." So it is, too, with trading cards.

Twiddle

At the beginning of the game, each player peels off their initial 7-card hand and sets the rest of their cards aside to form their "Library" (i.e., draw pile). Discarded cards form a "Grave Yard" next to the Library (I bet that's a quiet street corner they're on). One player is selected to play first and, when his/her turn is complete, turns alternate between players until the game is won.

Each turn, a player goes through the five steps in the sequence of play. First, they reset their previously played cards and prepare them for use again this turn (a proceedure known as "untapping"). Next, any housekeeping chores dictated by the cards that must be conducted every turn are done. Here, one might have to pay to maintain a card on the table or become damaged (or healed) from some continuing spell. The third step is to draw a single card from your own Library and add it to the other spells in your hand.

Step four is the main phase where card play really occurs. Here, one can bring a single land into play (lands provide manna in one of the five colors of magic) each turn. Lands (and certain artifacts) can then be "tapped" (i.e., used up until your next turn's step one) to pay the cost of casting a spell (i.e., playing a card from your hand). Once cast, a spell card might allow a player to summon a creature (that can be sent to beat up one's opponent), zap out a little one-shot magic spell, enchant something (a permanent effect until the enchantment is broken) or otherwise cause something interesting to occur on the table.

It is also during the main phase where one can order their monsters to go and attack the opposing wizard. If that player also has some untapped critters handy, they can be sent out to block these previously summoned attackers. Battles between opposing creatures are quickly and easily resolved, as is any damage infilcted upon the defending wizard. Finally, a player holding more than seven cards at the end of their turn must discard their hand down to seven.

Time Walk

At the heart of it, Magic: The Gathering doesn't sound like there is a lot to it, but as the saying goes, "it's all in the cards." The 302 cards intended for release in this Deckmaster series game have been carefully culled from a playtest selection too numerous to mention. Similarly, some cards were selected to be common while others are more rare, not only to add value to them for collectors, but also to balance the game. (Hey, too many Demonic Hordes can spoil the broth, you know?).

The card themselves, while beautiful, are also functional. Each contains the needed information to play and explains any special rules (or violations of the standard rules) that it permits. It is here, in the cards, where the game aspect of Magic: The Gathering really shines. The secret of success in the game is not the strength of any particular card (under the right circumstances EVERY card will have an especially decisive moment for its play). Instead, it is obtaining COMBINATIONS of cards that is the key to winning play strategies.

For example, a Black Vise makes a player suffer one point of damage for every card in their hand over four that they begin their turn with. Combine that with a Braingeyser or Ancestral Recall spell, or a Howling Mine artifact (all of which can force your opponent to take extra cards), and then the Black Vise can be especially deadly. Better still, have two Black Vises going in combination with these cards and watch an opponent collapse like lightning due to taking double damage for each card he/she has over four! The same goes for spells that enchant monsters. Suddenly they might be able to fly, regenerate or find other extra strengths or abilities that make them neigh invincible.

This is where the two years of testing and balancing the decks and card ratios comes into play. Magic: The Gathering has actually evolved into an finely tuned Scissors-Rock-Paper game with playing cards. That is because for every problem (or combination of problems) an opponent might hurl at you, there are always some cards out there (somewhere!) that will redress the situation. Due to its nature as a card game, however, whether the right card comes up any time soon (or if it is even in your deck) is a question left up to the fates. Fortunately, the most common cards can deal effectively with many a nasty situation, so help is always available to the canny, patient and reasonably lucky player.

Someone Laid a Dingus Egg

Magic: The Gathering does have one glaring weakness, however. Tragically, the rules have proven themselves to be, while not overly complex, presented in a manner that makes them about as clear as mud. The 36-page booklet included with each deck of Magic: The Gathering cards is printed in about 6 point type (i.e., damn small) and, to make matters worse for those of us requiring glasses, the text on some of the cards is even smaller! While the packaging mentions nothing about the magnifying glass required to play, having one handy could

be a real plus.

But don't bother reading the rules if you can find someone who really knows how to play to teach it to you. No one, it seems, plays the game correctly after the first read-through of the rules anyway. There are just too many new (although not particularly complex) concepts that are not clearly explained or illustrated. Still, what self respecting gamer ever let learning the correct way to play a game stand in their way of having a good time with it?

After a flood of rules questions arriving by mail, telephone and electronically over the various computer networks, Wizards of the Coast is putting together a stop gap "Frequently Asked Questions" file and a set of 2nd edition rules. Personally, I can't seem to get people to grasp the concept that attacking monsters cannot select the opponent's creatures as targets or that the spell casting cost to summon a creature does NOT have to be paid again in order to attack with it. However, I'm not about to give up trying to make these points clear to new players.

Finally, some of the cards in the first printing of the game were not proofed in time before they went on press. Therefore, several mistakes crept through that players immediately stumbled over in their excited rush to play the game. While these will be corrected in subsequent printings of the cards (adding, perhaps, to the first edition's collector value), it's been a downright nuisance to neophytes trying to come to grips with the muddy, microprint rules. Still, dedicated gamers will triumph over such adversities and, in the case of Magic: The Gathering, I've seen many people play the game completely wrong, yet still enjoy their misinterpreted experience with the rules. C'est le jeu. (Such is the game.)

The (Non) Demonic Hordes

In the Truth-is-Stranger-Than-Fiction-Department, allow me to relate a personal experience that occurred during the Gateway '93 game convention held in Los Angeles over Labor Day Weekend. Had not the likes of Shadis' own Jolly Blackburn and company actually witnessed these events, rest assured that this part of the article might have been edited out as too weird to believe.

In the three weeks prior to Labor Day Weekend (the first weekend of September) 1993, every store in Southern California had experienced a huge demand for Magic: The Gathering decks and booster packs (the latter being 15 cards sold separately for $2.45). None were to be found throughout the Southland, and the phones at retail outlets were ringing with customers wanting to know when more would arrive. On the day before the convention opened, the cards began to appear again in stores and they made their return debut, appropriately, in the exhibitor room of the convention.

As decks were bought, the open areas of the convention were quickly covered with games of Magic: The Gathering. It

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GAMA

was the instant darling of the con, and the cards in the dealer's room were quickly sold out. The game playing continued unabated, however, and my (then) 7-year old son James was taking on all comers, crushing them in turn by springing one of "Daddy's Decks O' Doom" on them which I had just put together for him before the show opened. As one of his victims (Patrick Barnes) commented later on the GEnie network, "Do not underestimate James Emrich — especially if you are playing for an ante. You won't be taking candy from THIS baby!" (Ah, I'm proud of you, son.)

Playing soon gave way to trading as new cardholders attempted to build complete sets of cards or fill out certain colors of magic that they wanted to assemble into stronger, "theme" decks. It was at this time that I finished "gathering" my own complete set of cards (all 295 that were available at the time) and put them on display in the open gaming area. The crowds around that notebook amazed even me, and the envy in the eyes of many onlookers was unmistakable. Even my wife and kid were proud of the new "family jewel" (and how many games can you say THAT about?).

It was when the cards sold out in the dealer room that the real frenzy began. Gamers loaded up in their cars and fanned out over the Southland in an effort to raid every deck from every hobby shop that had any. Reports came back that these hobby shops were being ravaged as gamers raced each other through their doors. Many stores instituted a policy of card sales rationing — one deck and one booster pack per customer per day, which became the standard practice of most gaming retailers in the area. After cards were purchased, their new owners would rush back to the convention floor and begin to barter them away, seeking to trade them for more of the specific cards they sought.

Incredulous at this response, dealers who had bought a few unopened packs of cards for themselves (before they were all gone) decided to open them at this point and sell their contents individually! Common terrain cards went for $.25 apiece, while rare creatures fetched anywhere from $5 - $10 a pop. It was free market, supply and demand economics at its finest, and the frenzy continued unabated. There was even a secondary trading market that opened up in colored, transparent Pente stones, since most of the players of Magic at this convention were buying them up and using them for "tap" and "life" markers. They, too, quickly became sold out and were added to the list of "tradable" items.

About this time, I realized what I had to do. Having only just completed my collection of the entire set of Magic: The Gathering cards, I announced that I would put it up for auction on the last day of the convention. What it might fetch, I could only speculate, but I had to find out. My curiosity got the best of me, despite the crushed look on my sweet son's face when I told him I was selling our complete set of cards. When asked why I was selling it, I replied that "after you climb Mt. Everest, all there is to do is enjoy the view for a moment, then climb back down." Now we're back to collecting again at the Emrich household, and enjoying every minute of it, just like before!

The first bid for the complete set of cards was $100. The second was $200. To a packed and hushed room of gamers who had gathered to witness the sale of this phenomena, the bids kept mounting... $300, $350, $400. I though that a few people were going to faint when the bidding topped $500. Slowly, the bids creeped ever upward, but when the last bid eked up to exactly $600, the gavel fell and the lot was sold. A thunderous ovation arose from the crowd, both for the buyer and the seller. Since I was also the auctioneer (and have been at game conventions for over 15 years), I had felt like I had just given birth. I stumbled back to the microphone and said, jokingly, "has anybody got a cigarette?" And with that, a collector's price for a complete set of first printing Magic: The Gathering cards was established within a month of the game's release.

Control Magic

We all learned in school that "nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come." Clearly, the day of the card game/trading card set is upon us. At GenCon, Wizards of the Coast was approached by several companies seeking a Deckmaster game for their respective flagship products. The buzz that White Wolf was still eager to see their Vampire: The Masquerade done (playtesting on this Deckmaster game is rumored to begin soon), and then... who knows? Perhaps there will be BattleTech, Cyberpunk or something else on the horizon in the months ahead. Other companies, too, noticed the success of this idea. Will playing/trading card games soon go into development at other game companies? It wouldn't surprise me one bit if they did.

The immediate future for Magic: The Gathering is the printing of more cards, with corrections made and previously omitted cards finally added (the Circle of Protection: Black and Volcanic Island terrain cards were inadvertently not printed in the first run). Also, one more of each of the five basic terrain types will be produced, so that there will be a third image of swamps, plains, etc. to play with. This will raise the total number of different cards available in Magic: The Gathering to 302.

Additionally, Wizards of the Coast has created a "Duelists' Convocation" as their official Deckmaster games' organization (the 1-year membership was $15 at GenCon and those under 18 require a parent's signature). In addition to a certificate, one also receives the newsletter and a chance to pre-order future cards. Hopefully, these people will also get the much needed "Frequently Asked Questions" hotsheet or, better still, the second edition rules when they become available.

Beyond that, there will be a collector's edition of the card set printed (with one of each card). These cards will have square corners however so no one can slip them into a normal deck of Magic

cards.

The first expansion for The Gathering will be Arabian Nights, due out around the end of 1993. It will feature 70 new cards that fully integrate into Magic: The Gathering. These will be sold only in booster packs of 8 cards each and the rumor from inside Wizards of the Coast has it that "the nature of terrain might well be altered" with this expansion (whatever that means).

A complete, new game in the Deckmaster series will be Magic: The Ice Age, due out, presumably, in the Summer of 1994. This second Magic game is not specifically designed to be compatible with The Gathering, but players should be able to use cards from both sets together (it's just that the results of doing so will not have been playtested and might cause some unpredictable results).

At the end of the day, what we have with Magic: The Gathering is a game small enough to take anywhere (assuming one only takes a playing deck or two around and not their entire collection), fast enough to finish during a lunch hour, pretty enough to lure virtually any onlooker into playing it, plus enjoyable and varied enough so that you'll want to play it over and over again in marathon sessions. Clearly, the game demonstrates more than enough "lift" to make up for the "drag" caused by the frequently opaque and all-to-subtle rules manual and card misprintings. What makes it transcend mere mortality as a game, however, is that its trading card aspect has turned gamers into collectors, many of whom are discovering the true meaning of free market capitalism for the first time in their lives. Brace yourselves, people. As a 20-year veteran in this hobby and a native Californian, I predict that you'll be able to read the aftershocks from this baby on the Richter Scale of gaming for a long time to come.

Demonic Tutor

This supplemental section on Magic: The Gathering is for those lucky enough to already own more than a single deck to play with. These people usually begin arranging them into customized "playing decks" that they have designed along certain lines for improved play. Here, I will present some deck designing philosophy that might guide you into building "The Deck of Probable Victory."

The first question one must ask is "How large a deck do I want to play with?" While the rules set a minimum playing deck size at 40 (which drops to 39 after the ante), there is no maximum deck size. I've seen monster decks nearly a foot tall, rife with every Demonic Tutor (which allows one to riff through their Library/draw pile and select whatever card they want) that the owner could get his hands on. I've also seen lean, mean 40-card decks that gave their owners more predictability as to when a certain card was likely to appear.

However, I was not overly impressed by either of these deck sizing strategies. It is often possible to drag out a game beyond 40 cards' worth of play (and when your deck is exhausted, you lose), making small decks somewhat dangerous. Besides, the risk of losing a particularly precious card from a 40-card deck is pretty good (since Murphy's Law will always be working against you). Conversely, monster decks are subject to so much variation in what order the cards might come up in (besides the hassle of carrying and shuffling them) that I wouldn't even bother with one. Instead, I try to build decks of about 60-65 cards, which fit neatly into a Magic: The Gathering box. These decks provide me with a nice variety of cards and I have always lasted the duration of every duel I've fought.

The Library of Leng

The second question usually is "What terrain-to-spell-ratio of cards should I put in my deck?" When you buy a new deck, the ratio of terrain cards in it usually "lands" (forgive the pun) between 25% - 33%. I've found this ration to work pretty well in practice, too. Thus, becuase

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I like to get that manna going quickly, in my 60-65 card decks, about 20-22 cards will be manna generators of some type, including mixed terrain cards (such as Badlands and Tundra) and manna producing/storing/converting artifacts like the Mox stones, Sol Ring, Basalt Monolith, Black Lotus, etc.

Therefore, in my 60 card deck, 1/3 (20) are manna related (usually terrain cards in the color theme(s) I'm working in, which will be discussed in a moment) while the other 40 consist of spells and miscellaneous artifacts. It is in those 40 cards where a deck design will prove its merit, so here is where one's own personal deck building philosophies come into play.

Generally, decks that concentrate on a single color are the most efficient in terms of getting cards played as they are acquired. Let's face it, if every terrain card you draw is a swamp and every spell is black magic, it won't be long before the Lord of the Pit is summoned to back up your Nightmare and hordes of Drudge Skeletons. Boom, boom, boom — your cards will be in play as fast as you can draw them.

However, each color has inherent strengths and weaknesses. To help offset some of these single color weakness (usually at a cost of some of its strengths), many players (myself included) prefer two-color decks. Combinations like black-and-red are great for offense and destruction, while blue-and-white decks can create many nuisances while protecting a player. Here, while the two-color variations are finite among the five basic colors of magic, the "themes" generated in each deck are endless.

Some players like to pack their decks with big, rare monsters and spells. While they are great to play with, it generally takes a while for their owner to get enough manna out on the table to cast them — time that a canny opponent can use to great effect. Also a deck stuffed with rare, powerful cards is far more likely to have one at risk and sitting out of play in the ante. What I have found to be a good mix is to make about 1/3 of my spell cards (about 15 - 17 total cards) in my usual deck of 60 as "critters" that I can summon. However, I like to have a nice variety of cheap and expensive-to-cast creatures, plus a wall or two in every deck. Making sure that there are some flying creatures (or something that can block them) is also important when building a well balanced Magic: The Gathering deck.

Most of the rest of the spells are there for "support." Some will be offensive (like Lightning or a Power Leak), others will be defensive (like a Castle or Tranquillity), but when selecting these cards — I just go by feel and look for a balanced mix. It is in the acquisition of the right card at the right time where Magic: The Gathering is truly a card game, so no amount of proper card ratios is going to help a deck once any bad luck gets shuffled into it. At that point, all a player

can do is rest assured that they put the card they'll need in that deck somewhere (and, hopefully, they will draw it when they need it).

Finally, I'll throw in about a half-dozen artifacts to fill up my deck to 60 - 65 cards. Which ones will depend on the theme of that deck. Like the spell cards, they will either be chosen because they specifically strengthen the deck's design goal or they help offset some of its weaknesses. More artifacts than that, while useful, too often leaves them sitting aside in the ante, so I tend to be pretty conservative with them.

Of course, color(s) matter, too. Some players really do prefer the strong, single color decks. Most experienced players I've seen opt for two-color decks. Others will push this to three colors (although one of these three is usually the "main" color with the other two provided in lesser numbers and "cast" in a supporting role). Heck, I've even seen an "Eenie Meenie Weenie" deck with several Celestial Prisms (which can change two manna of any color into one of a preferred color) and a ton of one-color manna monsters and spells from each of the five colors of magic. Fighting it was like trying to stop a masquerading horde of army ants. I simply never knew what to expect next!

Finally, remember the true secret of Magic: The Gathering when assembling your own custom decks. It's not the strength of individual cards, its the strength of their combinations when played together. Try to design decks that have combinations of cards that are particularly effective when used in conjunction. Experience and your own good gaming sense are your best teachers here.

Wrath of God

Of course, some decks can be specifically designed to frustrate the "average, strong, balanced deck" in Magic: The Gathering. Known as "degenerate decks" among playtesters, each could easily be undone by a deck designed to specifically counter it, but when up against a normal deck, they are as deadly as can be.

My personal favorite is the Apocalyptic Deck 'o Doom. After trading for several Plague Rat cards, I stuck 15 of them, along with a few Keldon Warlords (each of these creatures becomes stronger as others are summoned) into the deck, and backed them up with a couple Bad Moons, Fear and some Howls from Beyond. A few spells for some protection, plus a couple of Pestilence cards to keep the enemy's cheap monsters from bothering me, rounded out the deck. This black-and-red combination, especially with a Kormus Bell in the deck

(turning all the swamps played into 1/1 value creatures) was extremely lethal (especially since no Circle of Protection: Black was included in the first printing of the game).

At GenCon I noticed some brilliant decks put together by Rick D. S. Marshall, a fanatic deck designer who challenged players to beat him as the "master" in the Wizards of the Coast booth. One deck he called "White Weenie Madness," which consisted primarily of four cards: Plains (of course), Benalish Heroes, Mesa Pegasi and Holy Strength. Here, the secret was that both of these creature types had the banding special ability, which Rick used to amazing effect. I certainly learned the value of banding as I watched a flood of those cheap-to-cast creatures come out quickly and hit hard. The blindingly fast, overwhelming attacks made from this deck are something that I'll always remember.

Another of Rick's masterpieces was probably much harder for him to assemble, as it consisted of no creatures, no direct damage spells and, really, no offensive stuff at all. Heck, I didn't even see a terrain card played out of it! Yet I never saw this deck lose. It was Rick's now infamous "Walk Into This" deck (he said, waving his hand back-and-forth in a face slapping motion). This deck was crammed with Counterspells, Power Sinks, Steal Artifacts, Control Magic, Psychic Venom, Black Vises, Braingeysers and other cards that turn whatever the other player does against him somehow. Powered by a ton of Mox stones, this deck was the most evil perversion of fair play that I had ever seen. (Way to go, Rick. I wish that I'd invented it!)

A favorite deck of Dave Howell's is his "X Deck." Rife with Forests, Llanowar Elves, Wild Growth and Sol Rings, he likes to have a ton of manna hit the table fast. When supplemented by some Mountains, Fireballs and Disintegrate spells, he's usually doing 6-8 points of damage with them by the fourth turn of play. Few of his opponents survive to see their 10th turn.

Wheel of Fortune

I'd like to offer one simple house rule that we use out here in Los Angeles and that we've found many people like. We allow players to "pass" their entire Step 4 (Main Phase). Passing entails taking no action and playing no cards (including terrain). A player who passes during their Step 4 may, if desired, draw another card from their Library.

We found this house rule works particularly well with beginners (especially those playing with new decks), as they always seem to be desperate for another card — usually one that they can actually play. It works well with experienced

players, too, as they are often better prepared to take advantage of every Main Phase they can get, so sacrificing one for another draw is an important strategic decision (particularly when rapidly exhausting their Library).

One game variation that was suggested to me by Steve Barcia (of SimTex Software and the lead programmer/designer of MicroProse recent Master of Orion computer game) is an excellent five-player duel to the death. Here is how it works:

Each player must make a deck with a different, single color of magic in it only (plus artifacts and that color's matching terrain type). They sit at the table according to the position of their color as shown on the pentagram arrangement on the back of every Magic: The Gathering playing card. Thus, the white player will sit between green and blue, red will sit between green and black, etc.

After randomly determining who will go first, players take their turns in a clockwise rotation and they are free to help or hinder others at the table as they see fit within the normal rules of Magic: The Gathering. The winner is the first player to find the players representing the two colors directly opposite his own, eliminated. For example, for blue player to win, both the green and red players must be eliminated. Thus, one can often receive some assistance from the players seated immediately to their left and right, while they must destroy the two players seated opposite of themselves.

Since this is a wild, free-for-all situation, playing for ante must be adjusted a bit. In this scenario, the winner collects the ante from eliminated players only. Surviving players are allowed to keep their ante.

A three player game can be played as well. In this game whoever actually knocks out the firt player looses his next turn giving his remaining opponent two turns to attack him.

Crusade

Okay, here's the big payoff for all you Magic: The Gathering collectors (and potential collectors) — a complete listing of all 302 of those wacky Magic: The Gathering trading cards. It also includes my appraisal of how rare each card is based on the rather large samplings of myself and close trading buddies (we have over 4,000 cards between us).

Note that there are only four classifications of scarcity for Magic: The Gathering trading cards. Terrain cards are the most frequent, followed by regular "common" cards, "uncommon" cards and, finally, "rare" cards. For the purposes of this discussion, however, I'll lump terrain cards in with all of the other common cards.

The folks at Wizard of the Coast did admit that each category of card scarcity was printed in equal numbers. In other words, there are just as many Lord of the Pits out there as there are Scrublands so, therefore, they are both equally rare (or uncommon, or common, depending upon a card's scarcity classification).

Based upon our card sampling and a careful analysis of method in which the decks and booster packs we purchased were assembled, **Table I** shows you what you can expect to find, in terms of collector's items, when you open a package of Magic: The Gathering cards:

Note that when you open a package of Magic: The Gathering cards, the cards are assembled in a very specific sequence. Decks, for instance, have the first two cards as the rare ones, followed by 13 uncommon, the rules booklet, then the remaining 45 common cards. Booster packs are just the opposite, with 11 common cards facing up on the top, followed by the 3 uncommon and, finally, the rare card at the bottom. Terrain cards, however, are placed randomly throughout these packages and appear like jokers in the sequence. Thus, there might be a terrain card in a deck where a rare card is normally positioned, then the purchaser is gypped out of a rare card! Sad, but true, this is one of life's little dissapointments when collecting Magic: The Gathering trading cards. Finally, we've noticed a clear pattern that shows that one receives a higher percentage of terrain cards in the booster packs than in the decks (which seems odd).

Again, let me reiterate that these are our personal estimates and that this is not an "official" list. Wizards of the Coast knows that I've put this information together for Shadis readers, and they will be publishing their own official, paperback book on the game soon (which will supersede this listing). However, we've worked hard to "crack the rare card code" as shown in **Table II**. ❑

Table I

	Common	Uncommon	Rare	Total Cards
Booster	11	3	1	15
Deck	45	13	2	60

Table II

	# of Common	# of Uncommon	# of Rare	Total
Artifacts	0	20	27	47
Black Spell Color	15	15	16	46
Blue Spell Color	15	15	16	46
Red Spell Color	15	15	16	46
Green Spell Color	15	15	16	46
White Spell Color	15	15	16	46
Regular Land cards	15	0	0	15
Special Land cards	0	0	10	10
Total	**90**	**95**	**116**	**302**

Magic: The Gathering Checklist

ARTIFACTS

NAME	FREQUENCY
❑ Ankh of Mishra	Rare
❑ Basalt Monolith	Uncom
❑ Black Lotus	Rare
❑ Black Vise	Uncom
❑ Celestial Prism	Uncom
❑ Chaos Orb	Rare
❑ Clockwork Beast	Rare
❑ Conservator	Uncom
❑ Copper Tablet	Uncom
❑ Crystal Rod	Uncom
❑ Cyclopean Tomb	Rare
❑ Dingus Egg	Rare
❑ Disrupting Scepter	Rare
❑ Forcefield	Rare
❑ Gauntlet of Might	Rare
❑ Glasses of Urza	Uncom
❑ Helm of Chatzuk	Rare
❑ Howling Mine	Rare
❑ Icy Manipulator	Uncom
❑ Illusionary Mask	Rare
❑ Iron Star	Uncom
❑ Ivory Cup	Uncom
❑ Jade Monolith	Rare
❑ Jade Statue	Uncom
❑ Jayemdae Tome	Rare
❑ Juggernaut	Uncom
❑ Kormus Bell	Rare
❑ Library of Leng	Uncom
❑ Living Wall	Uncom
❑ Meekstone	Rare
❑ Mox Emerald	Rare
❑ Mox Jet	Rare
❑ Mox Pearl	Rare
❑ Mox Ruby	Rare
❑ Mox Sapphire	Rare
❑ Nevinyrrals Disk	Rare
❑ Obsianus Golem	Uncom
❑ Rod of Ruin	Uncom
❑ Sol Ring	Uncom
❑ Soul Net	Uncom
❑ Sunglasses of Urza	Rare
❑ The Hive	Rare
❑ Throne of Bone	Uncom
❑ Time Vault	Rare
❑ Winter Orb	Rare
❑ Wooden Sphere	Uncom

LANDS

❑ Badlands	Rare
❑ Bayou	Rare
❑ Forest (type 1)	Com
❑ Forest (type 2)	Com
❑ Forest (type 3)*	Com
❑ Island (type 1)	Com
❑ Island (type 2)	Com
❑ Island (type 3)*	Com
❑ Mountain (type 1)	Com
❑ Mountain (type 2)	Com
❑ Mountain (type 3)*	Com
❑ Plains (type 1)	Com
❑ Plains (type 2)	Com
❑ Plains (type 3)*	Com
❑ Plateau	Rare
❑ Savannah	Rare
❑ Scrubland	Rare
❑ Swamp (type 1)	Com
❑ Swamp (type 2)	Com
❑ Swamp (type 3)*	Com
❑ Taiga	Rare
❑ Tropical Island	Rare
❑ Tundra	Rare
❑ Underground Sea	Rare
❑ Volcanic Island*	Rare

BLACK SPELLS

❑ Animate Dead	Uncom
❑ Bad Moon	Rare
❑ Black Knight	Uncom
❑ Bog Wraith	Uncom
❑ Contract from Below	Rare
❑ Cursed Land	Uncom
❑ Darkpact	Rare
❑ Dark Ritual	Com
❑ Deathgrip	Uncom
❑ Deathlace	Rare
❑ Demonic Attorney	Rare
❑ Demonic Hordes	Rare
❑ Demonic Tutor	Rare
❑ Drain Life	Com
❑ Durdge Skeletons	Com
❑ Evil Presence	Uncom
❑ Fear	Com
❑ Frozen Shade	Com
❑ Gloom	Rare
❑ Howl from Beyond	Com
❑ Hypnotic Specter	Uncom
❑ Lich	Rare
❑ Lord of the Pit	Rare
❑ Mind Twist	Rare
❑ Nether Shadow	Rare
❑ Nettling Imp	Uncom
❑ Nightmare	Rare
❑ Paralyze	Com
❑ Pestilence	Com
❑ Plague Rats	Com
❑ Raise Dead	Com
❑ Royal Assassin	Rare
❑ Sacrifice	Uncom
❑ Scathe Zombies	Com
❑ Scavenging Ghoul	Uncom
❑ Sengir Vampire	Uncom
❑ Simulacrum	Uncom
❑ Sinkhole	Com
❑ Terror	Com
❑ Unholy Strength	Com
❑ Wall of Bone	Uncom
❑ Warp Artifact	Rare
❑ Weakness	Com
❑ Will-O-The-Wisp	Rare
❑ Word of Command	Rare
❑ Zombie Master	Rare

BLUE SPELLS

❑ Air Elemental	Rare
❑ Ancestral Recall	Rare
❑ Animate Artifact	Uncom
❑ Blue Elemental Blast	Com
❑ Braingeyser	Rare
❑ Clone	Uncom
❑ Control Magic	Uncom
❑ Copy Artifact	Rare
❑ Counterspell	Rare
❑ Creature Bond	Com
❑ Drain Power	Uncom
❑ Feedback	Uncom
❑ Flight	Com
❑ Invisibility	Com
❑ Jump	Com
❑ Lifetap	Uncom
❑ Lord of Atlantis	Rare
❑ Magical Hack	Rare
❑ Mahamoti Djinn	Rare
❑ Manna Short	Rare
❑ Merfolk of the Pearl Trident	Com
❑ Phantasmal Forces	Uncom
❑ Phantasmal Terrain	Com
❑ Phantom Monster	Uncom
❑ Pirate Ship	Rare
❑ Power Leak	Com
❑ Power Sink	Com
❑ Prodigal Sorcerer	Com
❑ Psionic Blast	Uncom
❑ Psychic Venom	Com
❑ Sea Serpent	Com
❑ Siren's Call	Rare
❑ Sleight of Mind	Rare
❑ Spell Blast	Com
❑ Stasis	Rare
❑ Steal Artifact	Rare
❑ Thoughtlace	Rare
❑ Time Twister	Rare
❑ Time Walk	Rare
❑ Twiddle	Com
❑ Unsummon	Com
❑ Vesuvan Doppelganger	Rare
❑ Volcanic Eruption	Rare
❑ Wall of Air	Rare
❑ Wall of Water	Uncom
❑ Water Elemental	Uncom

GREEN SPELLS

❑ Aspect of Wolf	Rare
❑ Berserk	Uncom
❑ Birds of Paradise	Rare
❑ Camouflage	Rare
❑ Channel	Uncom
❑ Cockatrice	Rare
❑ Craw Wurm	Com
❑ Elvish Archers	Rare
❑ Fastbond	Rare
❑ Fog	Com
❑ Force of Nature	Rare
❑ Fungusaur	Rare
❑ Gaea's Liege	Rare
❑ Giant Growth	Com
❑ Giant Spider	Com
❑ Grizzly Bears	Com
❑ Hurricane	Uncom
❑ Ice Storm	Rare
❑ Instill Energy	Uncom
❑ Ironroot Treefolk	Com
❑ Kudzu	Rare
❑ Ley Druid	Uncom
❑ Lifeforce	Uncom
❑ Lifelace	Rare
❑ Living Artifact	Rare
❑ Living Lands	Rare
❑ Llanowar Elves	Com
❑ Lure	Uncom
❑ Natural Selection	Rare
❑ Regeneration	Com
❑ Regrowth	Uncom
❑ Scryb Sprites	Com
❑ Shanodin Dryads	Com
❑ Stream of Life	Com
❑ Thicket Basilisk	Uncom
❑ Timber Wolves	Rare
❑ Tranquillity	Com
❑ Tsunami	Rare
❑ Verduran Enchantress	Rare
❑ Wall of Brambles	Uncom
❑ Wall of Ice	Uncom
❑ Wall of Wood	Com
❑ Wanderlust	Rare
❑ War Mammoth	Com
❑ Web	Rare
❑ Wild Growth	Com

RED SPELLS

❑ Burrowing	Uncom
❑ Chaoslace	Rare
❑ Disintegrate	Com
❑ Dragon Whelp	Uncom
❑ Dwarven Demolition Team	Uncom
❑ Dwarven Warriors	Com
❑ Earthbind	Com
❑ Earth Elemental	Uncom
❑ Earthquake	Rare
❑ False Orders	Com
❑ Fireball	Com
❑ Firebreathing	Com
❑ Fire Elemental	Uncom
❑ Flashfires	Uncom
❑ Fork	Rare
❑ Goblin Balloon Brigade	Uncom
❑ Goblin King	Rare
❑ Granite Gargoyle	Rare
❑ Gray Ogre	Com
❑ Hill Giant	Com
❑ Hurloon Minotaur	Com
❑ Ironclaw Orcs	Com
❑ Keldon Warlord	Uncom
❑ Lightning Bold	Com
❑ Manabarbs	Rare
❑ Manna Flare	Rare
❑ Mons s Goblin Raiders	Com
❑ Orcish Artillery	Uncom
❑ Orcish Oriflamme	Uncom
❑ Power Surge	Rare
❑ Raging River	Rare
❑ Red Elemental Blast	Com
❑ Rock Hydra	Rare
❑ Roc of Kher Ridge	Rare
❑ Sedge Troll	Rare
❑ Shatter	Com
❑ Shivan Dragon	Rare
❑ Smoke	Rare
❑ Stone Giant	Uncom
❑ Stone Rain	Com
❑ Tunnel	Uncom
❑ 2-Headed Giant of Foriys	Rare
❑ Uthden Troll	Uncom
❑ Wall of Fire	Rare
❑ Wall of Stone	Uncom
❑ Wheel of Fortune	Rare

WHITE SPELLS

❑ Animate Wall	Rare
❑ Armageddon	Rare
❑ Balance	Rare
❑ Benalish Hero	Com
❑ Black Ward	Uncom
❑ Blaze of Glory	Rare
❑ Blessing	Rare
❑ Blue Ward	Uncom
❑ Castle	Uncom
❑ Circle of Protection:	
❑ Black*	Com
❑ Blue	Com
❑ Green	Com
❑ Red	Com
❑ White	Com
❑ Consecrate Land	Uncom
❑ Conversion	Uncom
❑ Crusade	Rare
❑ Death Ward	Com
❑ Disenchant	Com
❑ Farmstead	Rare
❑ Green Ward	Uncom
❑ Guardian Angel	Com
❑ Healing Salve	Com
❑ Holy Armor	Com
❑ Holy Strength	Com
❑ Island Sanctuary	Rare
❑ Karma	Uncom
❑ Lance	Uncom
❑ Mesa Pegasus	Com
❑ Northern Paladin	Rare
❑ Pearled Unicorn	Com
❑ Personal Incarnation	Rare
❑ Purelace	Rare
❑ Red Ward	Uncom
❑ Resurrection	Uncom
❑ Reverse Damage	Rare
❑ Righteousness	Rare
❑ Samite Healer	Com
❑ Savannah Lions	Rare
❑ Serra Angel	Uncom
❑ Swords to Plowshares	Uncom
❑ Veteran Bodyguard	Rare
❑ Wall of Swords	Uncom
❑ White Knight	Uncom
❑ White Ward	Uncom
❑ Wrath of God	Rare

* = Not included in the first print run.

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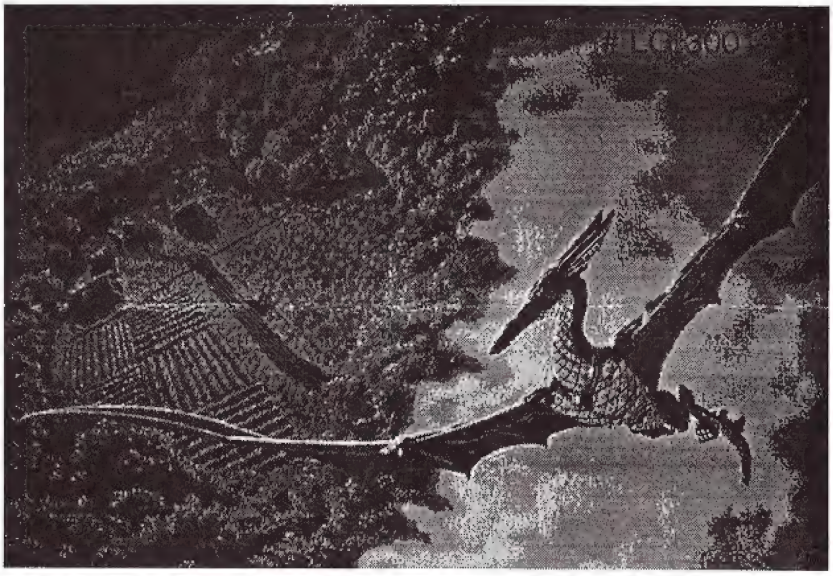

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SHADIS

INTERROGATIONS

The Gameweaver rapped his fingers lightly on the desk as he read the last of the file which lay scattered before him. He looked up, slightly annoyed, as his attention was drawn to a noise from across the room. Shad, his gnome assistant was entering the room. The gnome mopped his brow on the sleeve of his shirt as he shut the door.

"I can't find the Bounty Hunter anywhere boss! I've been to all his favorite haunts and no one has seen him. Two weeks and not a word! If he doesn't hurry we won't have any game celebs to interrogate this issue."

The Gameweaver smiled and leaned back in his chair. "I wouldn't worry about that Shad. The Bounty Hunter is the master of his profession. He'll track someone down soon enough. As it turns out, however, I think we might have some subject material right here under our very noses."

"Oh yeah?" exclaimed Shad, "I knew it! My drop-trap in the wine cellar finally caught Gary Gygax!! Boy, I can't wait to take a crack at him. I'll go set up the rack while you..."

"No, no you fool." The Gameweaver slapped his forehead in frustration. "I'm talking about these baffoons we're working for. I've been going over their files and they're really sketchy and vauge. I'm starting to wonder just who we're working for here. It's time we cleaned our own house a little and get these company records filled out properly. Don't you agree?"

"Saaayyy, that's a good idea. Let's throw them in the dungeon like we did that Dave Newton guy. He was ready to sing after a few days without food!"

"No, regardless of how we feel about these people - they do serve a purpose, for the time being. We need to handle this in such a way as to not prevent them from doing their jobs. Let's restrain from excessive force unless it's absoultely warranted."

"Awwwhhhh, boss."

"Now let's start with this B.A. character. He's always gone against my grain."

"Yeah, B.A.! Let's start with him!"

Subject: B.A. Felton
Aliases: Jerk, Bonehead, That Shadis Guy
Priors: Two-sided die design, Fireball Simulator

GW: Morning B.A. Just relax, I've called you down to the interrogation chamber to get to know you a little better. We've been so busy lately and all.

B.A.: Oh, just cut the crap old man. I didn't appreciate waking up in a gunny sack and being rolled down the stairs. What's this all about.

GW: I'm sorry - Shad does get a little overly enthused with these matters. I'm sure he simply misunderstood my request. I simply

asked him to send for you. I'm very sorry.
B.A.: Yeah....well...OK, but lets make this quick, I have to catch a plane to Juarez, Mexico in forty-five minutes.
GW: Juarez? Why on earth are you heading there?
B.A.: Hey there's some pretty hot gaming action in Juarez. I gotta keep a finger on the pulse-beat of the industry ya know. It's part of my job.
GW: Just a few questions really Mr. Felton. I've been going over the files here and there's really nothing here. A few contracts for the Fire Ball Simulator, a patent-denied form for a 2-sided die. But, no personal information.
B.A.: What do you want to know?
Shad: Did you really cause a power-outage at Lake Geneva last year?
GW: SHAD! What did we agree to?
Shad: Uh, you ask the questions?
GW: Right! Now B.A., tell us a little about your background and how you came to be on the SHADIS staff.
B.A.: Well, I was born and raised in Wampecong, Indiana. My dad was an entrepeneur in the Meat Industry...
GW: Meat Industry? Can you be more specific?
B.A.: He raised livestock which in turn was traded on the open market at a fair....
GW: Livestock? Please, more specifics?
B.A.: He was a PIG FARMER alright? Alright? Are you happy now?
GW: Touchy aren't we? Well I don't realy want to go that far back anyway. Just tell me how you got involved with Shadis.
B.A.: Oh, well I met Jolly at Ball State University. We used to sit in trees and do bird calls, but that's another story. I was walking by his room one day in the dorm and he had one complete wall covered with paper and he was working on this huge map of a world. We got to talking and I learned that he had been working on this world for several years as a back drop to his fantasy stories. Well as time passed we started gaming and Jolly naturally incorporated his fantasy-world into our role-playing campaigns. The rest is history.
Shad: Hey, why did you give up pig farming for gaming? Ha Ha - oink oink
B.A.: Yeah, real Scab. Any more questions? I'm in a hurry.
GW: Just a few more. I want to return to your duties on SHADIS. You seem to travel a lot - why?
B.A.: I do the convention circut mostly. Kind of a front man. I get out there and see what's going on and report back to the staff.
GW: Oh yes, I'm glad you brought up the conventions. You have made quite a name for yourself at these conventions.
B.A.: What are you talking about?
GW: Lets see, I have some newspaper clippings right here. What about the Aleutian Island convention?
B.A.: Hey, that fire wasn't my fault!
GW: And how about the riot you caused in Madagascar over that ten-sided die?
B.A.: The jerk was going to walk away with my lucky die!
Shad: I heard you scaled the TSR castle at GENCON in a dress!
B.A.: There's no proof of that! Those guys at the Mecca Center blew that all out of proportion.
GW: I think I've heard enough B.A. You can go.
B.A.: Yeah, well thanks for nothing.

SUBJECT: Dave Seay
Aliases: Flattop, Officer Yes,
Priors: None, he's a cop

GW: Ah, Mr. Seay I see that you got my message. Very nice of you to join me for a chat.
Dave: Sure thing G.W. always happy to help.
GW: I just want to update these files. You understand. Let's see, you're a police officer right?
Dave: Yeah. I grew up chasing orcs and when I found out they really existed under the bridges of L.A. I immediately signed up on the force.
GW: That So? I guess that would mean you have a background in gaming.
Shad: Hey, I get it! Officer Yes! It's a langauage joke. Officer Si, Officer Yes. That's cool. Hey Dave, can you sign off this speeding ticket? I think the cop had something against gnomes.
Dave: Cop? You mean officer don't you??
Shad: Oh sorry, Yeah, officer that's what I meant.
GW: Shad Please! My time with Officer Seay is limited. Dave you were about to tell me of your gaming background.
Dave: It's nothing too spectacular. I've been gaming since I was 14. I know something good when I see it. When I saw Shadis Magazine and found out there was a partner opening I jumped on it.
GW: So you're a writer?
Dave: Yeah, I'm a writer but you may not see my by-line in Shadis very often. I make sure it gets produced and delivered and that in itself is a full time job. Anyway, I do enough writing at my other job.
Shad: Wow, that must be exciting! Can I see your gun? Is that a laser sight?
GW: Shad that's not a toy! Ahhhh, production. I guess we have you to thank for our jobs.
Dave: Sorry, Shad it's loaded. Well, GW, I think Jolly, John and myself work well together. It's a team effort. We don't step on each other's toes and we each have our own unique talents and skills to lend to the magazine.
GW: What about B.A.?
Dave: Oh, he came along with Jolly. The guy's a genious but is definitely lacking common sense. I've locked people up for less than he's done at the office.
Shad: I'll go get the other one off the phone boss. Dave I left that ticket on your desk. Nudge Nudge wink wink. If ya know what I mean?
GW: Goodbye, Shad.
Dave: Anything else GW? I have a lot of work to do.
GW: Well, I have been meaning to ask you about that brief case you carry around.
Dave: Ahhhh, this is a magical brief case. I never go anywhere without it.
GW: Magical you say? Really? Oh, you must tell me more.
Dave: Oh yes, Game Weaver, this little leather case has changed countless lives.
GW: In what way?
Dave: Gaming of course. This is the brief case that started it all. It's a case of holding. If you dig deep enough you will find an origianl B-1 AD&D Module and an original DM's Guide reinforced with duct-tape. Oh and the smell! Here take a wiff GW. Doesn't it just make you think about setting up the game screens on a Saturday afternoon.
GW: By the gods it does. I like you Mr. Seay. Keep up the good work.
Dave: Thanks. You twant John next?

Realms

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GW: Yeah why?
Dave: Watch out for him he might try to sell you something. He sold me a house once.
GW: Really? Good deal huh?
Dave: Not really, it turned out to be the Governor of Iowa's house. I'm still in litigation on that one.
GW: Thanks for the warning.

SUBJECT: John Zinser
Aliases: Z-Man, Stress Case, Tommy Tom, 7 Ouch.
Priors: Countless Tournament Modules.

GW: I see Shad pulled you away from the phone, Mr. Zinser. Don't worry this will be painless.
John: Sure it will. I saw the bruises on B.A's butt! What's up with that?
GW: He fell down the stairs, but never mind that now. Tell me a little about yourself. What did you do prior to SHADIS?
John: After college I started a pizza business. When I got tired of doing that I started a business publishing guides for golf courses around the country. Since I love golf it was the perfect business.
GW: Golf? What's Golf?
John: Oh it's a game that's played outdoors. You have this little ball that you hit with a club. The object is to try and put the ball in a series of holes with the least strokes.
Shad: Hey that sounds a lot like Run-run!
John: Run-run? I've never heard of that game.
Shad: Oh it's the best. You get these little clubs and you run up to a stranger. Then you whack him across the knee caps and run-run. I used to be champ!
GW: Shad, please - I'm trying to interview John.
Shad: I don't play anymore though. I was in West L.A. last spring and I didn't run-run fast enough. Wanna see my scars?
John: That's a real interesting scar Shad.
Shad: I got another one - but I can't show you that one.
GW: Let's get back to the interview Mr.Zinser. Tell me how you became involved with SHADIS?
John: Well I was in Myrtle Beach back in 1991 doing one of my golf guides. I needed some quotes on printing and stopped by a local print shop. While I was there, I noticed this little magazine on a table and picked it up. It was a little small press gaming magazine and looked like a good read. I was told some guy named Jolly, wrote and published the magazine but he wasn't in. Later I read it and was really hooked. I called Jolly and he gave me all the back issues. After reading those I called him again and we started talking. Next thing I knew we were sitting in his apartment talking about becoming partners. When I returned to California months later, I showed the magazines to my friend Dave who shared my enthusiasm. To make a long story short, the three of us became partners and we set our first goal for the magazine. To give away 8,000 issues at GENCON. We were told it couldn't be done so it was a real thrill to be standing there on the last day of the con with 50 magazines left. We sent these back with various gamestores to give away.
GW: SHAD? What on earth are you doing?
Shad: I wanna show him my other scar!
GW: Put your pants back on and sit down. Not another peep from you. Do you understand?
Shad: Psst - Get with me later John.
John: um...er...yes, where was I? Well, Jolly wasn't pushing the magazine at all when I met him. He simply loved the gaming industry and it showed in the magazine. He was content with the readership he had at the time and really had his hands full. Besides the magazine, he was running a play-by-mail campaign and working on a series of maps for his world. When I started selling advertising, I knew I wouldn't have any problem convincing the game companies to come on board. There's been a real need for a truly independent games magazine and I think SHADIS is in a good position to fill that void.
Shad: Hey wow! What are these numbers on your golf sticks? Are these magical? I'll just take this +9 stick for myself.
GW: Shad put that back.
John: It's O.K. GW I need a caddie anyway. Shad would be perfect.
Shad: Caddie? I like the sound of that. Do I get a gun like Dave?
GW: Hmmmm...well that answers most of my questions John. I know you're busy so I'll let you get back to work. If you see Jolly would you mind sending him my way?

John: Sure, last time I saw him he was on America On-line trying to pick up chicks.

Subject: Jolly Blackburn
Aliases: None (who needs one with a name like Jolly?)
Priors: Freelance Writing, Dead-Cat Incident

GW: Awwh, Jolly. Please, sit down. I just have a few questions for you and we'll let you get back to work. I know you must be very busy as editor of SHADIS.
Jolly: Sure GW. Hey before we start, I wanted to let you know I'm going to have to deny Shad's request. I don't think....
GW: Shad's request?
Shad: Jolly, Jolly, let's not bother the boss with these little details. We can talk about this...
GW: Oh no Shad, I'm quite interested. Please go on, Jolly.
Shad: But...but...
Jolly: Well, Shad's been bugging me with his proposal for the magazine.
GW: Proposal?
Jolly: Well, yeah. He want's his own column - something about a beer-tasting review section and a single gamer's dating service. It was crazy. I thought it was a joke until the cover letters with your signature started coming.
GW: My signature?
Shad: I'm going for a Pepsi! Anyone here want a Pepsi?
GW: Sit down Shad. We'll discuss this later. Now, Jolly. Tell us about your background prior to Shadis. It's for the company records.
Jolly: My background? Oh well..where do I begin?
Shad: You were in the Army weren't you? Did you kill anybody?
Jolly: No Shad I didn't. I was in personnel.
Shad: Do you have a gun like Dave? Wanna go skeet shooting?
GW: Shad, for the last time stop questioning the subjects! Go ahead Jolly.
Jolly: OK, here's the quick version. I went to Ball State University where I majored in history and anthropology. After college I entered the U.S. Army and was whisked away to such places as El Paso, Texas and Germany. After Desert Storm I was selected for Drill Sergeant School. I had no desire to attend the school, so I opted to get out of the military.
GW: Ahh yes, I had heard you started the magazine when you were in the Army. That must have been a lot of work.
Jolly: Sure, but it was a lot of fun too. The only time I couldn't handle both jobs was when Desert Storm began. Although I wasn't sent over, I was involved with transitioning soldiers seven days a week, 18 hours per day. That pretty much killed the publishing schedule for nearly a year and a half.
GW: Oh, so that explains the stange gap in publishing? I was wondering, about that.
Jolly: It's really strange, because I never really set out to be doing this as a living. I started the magazine originally as a vehicle to get my material in front of the right people in the gaming industry. I always planned on working for an established company.
GW: I understand you started SHADIS out a bedroom in your house?
Jolly: That's true. You know I had been talking for years about starting my own magazine and one night I sat down and started drafting out some notes. A few months later, with the help of a few friends and my former-wife, the first issues of SHADIS were hitting the shelves. It's really been an adventure.
GW: Are you surprised at the way the magazine has taken off.
Jolly: The magazine was almost immediately well received. I had hoped SHADIS would find an audience and when I realized there were actually people out there who enjoyed reading SHADIS, I was certain it could go far. However, I will admit it was a big shock when I got to Gencon and saw that huge pile of 8,000 magazines sitting at our booth. That's when it dawned on me that we had actually pulled it off. It has always been a dream and I am happy with the way things are going. To have people like Keven Seimbeida and Gary Gygax stop by our booth to give us an 'atta boy' meant a lot to me.
Shad: I think he's going to cry boss. These creative types are so sensitive. Disgusting!
GW: Shad he signs your checks remember?
Shad: Huh? Oh...uh...by the way Jolly, I've been meaning to tell you, I thought the Criminal Justice article in Issue #8 was pure genious. And Your Fiction? I could go on forever.
GW: Jolly what can your readers expect to see in future issues of SHADIS?
Jolly: Well, we have billed ourselves as being an independent games magazine. We have a deep desire to provide coverage for those game companies who aren't getting fair coverage in the house-organ mags. We were well recieved at GENCON and one thing we heard repeatedly was "stay independent". There seems to be a trend in this industry. A magazine will make a name for itself and then do one of two things. Start producing their own game products or sell out to a game company and become a house-organ. We have vowed take a stand and stay indepenent. We've been tested already - since GENCON we've had three offers to become house organs for various companies. While leaving the door open - we've declined these offers. Of course if it comes to choosing between shutting down or allying ourselves with another company - we'd have to choose to survive.

At the moment however, SHADIS is going strong and we are confident we will succeed where others failed. I'm not being cocky. We are constantly being told that an independent games magazine can't survive. I guess we like a good challenge.
Shad: Is it true you slept with Pia Zadora?
Jolly: WHAT?
Shad: Well you're a single guy - and Pia Zadora's a babe. I was just wondering.
Jolly: No we've never met Shad.
Shad: So, what you're saying is, if you met Pia Zadora you would...
GW: Shad - shut up! Jolly, I understand SHADIS was built around a core of loyal contributors. Can you tell us more about these people?
Jolly: I'm glad you asked that question. We get patted on the back so much around here and I really feel uncomfortable with it because there has been so much help and support from people who have worked without pay for the last three years.

George Vrbanic, for example has been doing our covers and several dozen illustrations without any pay. Without his artwork - I doubt many people would have bothered to crack the cover and delve into the articles. So I owe him a lot for what has happened. Also, in this

category are artists like Janet Dupuy and Bob Hobbs. They have both been popular with readers and they have worked with little compensation. Let's see there's David Dixon - his cartoons have been a favorite with readers. In fact, when his cartoons failed to make an appearance in Shadis #9, I never thought I'd hear the end of it. There are too many others to list - just check out the contents page of any issue and you'll see a lot of names of people who have invested time and energy into this project without pay.

Shad: Hey you didn't mention me?

Jolly: Actually Shad, I'm still trying to figure out how you got involved with this magazine. No one seems to remember inviting you on board.

Shad: I'm going to get that Pepsi now.

GW: Jolly, I understand SHADIS has been undergoing some radical changes. Tell us more about this.

Jolly: Well, the first thing my partners and I did during our first meeting was to sit down and discuss what we wanted to do with SHADIS. When the dust cleared away we decided on a format that covered areas of gaming that haven't been getting their fair share of press. For example, Virtual Reality is coming upon us in a major way and there is no one covering it. Also Play-by-Mail games have been growing in leaps and bounds over the last ten years. New computer technology have really made it possible for one or two people to run mega-games that dwarf the old PBM games. While there are two magazines devoted entirely to this genre of gaming - these magazines are designed for veteran players who understand the jargon and mechanics of these games. Neophites are often lost or overwhelmed when confronted with these games and reluctant to play. We thought a small section that introduced gamers to this new generation of PBM games and gave good overviews of the various games being offered would be welcomed - and by the response so far - we we're right. Patrick Rodgers is heading up this new section and is doing a fantastic job.

We've also added a Miniatures section which is headed up by Ken Carpenter, former editor of Stroke and Dagger. We feel that by placing quality writers who are knowlegeable in specific areas of gaming we are only extending our service to the gaming community.

GW: Good, good. Let's see - I think I have enough for my files. You can return to your desk. Thank you.

Jolly: I'm glad to be of help. But do me a favor. Next issue, interrogate somebody a little more deserving. ❑

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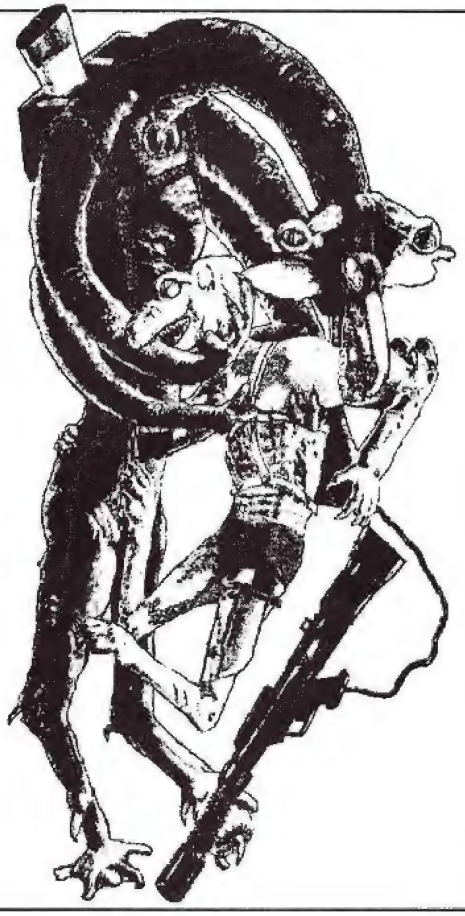

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EARTHDAWN™

Feature Review

by Jeff Zitomer

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What, yet another fantasy RPG? Wrongo folks. Let's face it, the market is flooded with bland fantasy role playing games. Has this become the hack genre of choice? Today's gamers are a pretty savvy bunch. Sure, a big company like FASA certainly has the resources and talent to put together a snazzy-looking game, but can this newcomer compete?

To survive in the modern FRPG wasteland, you've got to have two things going for you: a friendly, comprehensive system and an innovative setting. Most importantly, the system and the setting must mesh smoothly. Gamers don't want adventures anymore, they want stories. Is it any wonder why fantasy role playing classics like AD&D (it is the industry standard after all), ARS MAGICA, JORUNE and TALISLANTA have endured? Obviously, any newcomer to the genre faces stiff competition, but I believe FASA's EARTHDAWN deserves to be on that list of classics too.

I'm not going into a drawn-out description of the background, Theresa Verity did a pretty good job in SHADIS #9. In short, the world of EARTHDAWN is still recovering from a magical apocalypse called The Scourge. During the Scourge, a flood of Lovecraft-style monsters, called - appropriately enough - Horrors, swept across the land, ravaging and corrupting everything in their path. Even the gods were not spared.

Thanks to the Books of Harrow, texts which survived an earlier Scourge, the world was able to prepare for the coming of the Horrors. It seems that magic works in cycles. At its peak, the magical levels are high enough to allow the Horrors to cross over into this world. Knowing that there was no way to fight the Horrors, the various cities built magical vaults called kaers. Protected by powerful traps and wards, provided at larcenous rates by the evil Theran Empire, the people waited for over four hundred years. however, the Horrors were crafty and determined, not all kaers survived intact.

Now, about fifty years since the end of the Scourge, the magical energies have dropped low enough to for most, but not all, of the Horrors back to their own world. Most of the surviving kaers have opened and the people have begun to rebuild civilization. The topography has changed, but the plant life has grown back due to some inexplicable magical effect, but I couldn't tell you how the animals managed to survive.

Unfortunately, the Theran Empire also managed to survive and seems bent on reestablishing its former glory. The game is named after the ill-fated airship assigned to scout and chart the reborn world.

All of the standard races are here: Elves, Dwarves, Trolls, Orks and of course, Humans. There are also a few new additions: Windlings, small fairy-like beings; T'skrang, swashbuckling lizard men with whip-like tails; and Obsidimen, powerful rock men. In a nice change of pace, Dwarves are the political movers and shakers of EARTHDAWN. Short people of the world unite! Unfortunately, very little information is given about some of the races, especially the Windlings.

Character generation is pretty standard, and an archetype option is provided to speed things up. FASA promises additional archetypes and professions in future supplements. The only problem I had here was that there are no standard stats for each of the races. Without a baseline for comparison, attribute values can be pretty meaningless. When I spoke to FASA, I was told that they were aware of the oversight and

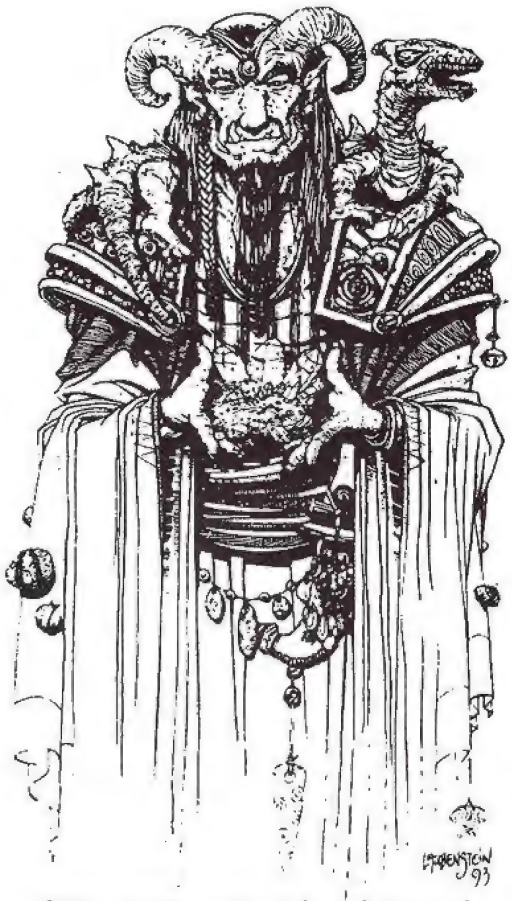
that sample stats would be appearing in the next supplement.

In EARTHDAWN, you play an adept. Players of SHADOWRUN will already be familiar with the concept, which has been expanded for this game. For the most part, adepts use magical talents instead of mundane skills. I could sum it up by saying that adepts are what legendary ninjas were to mundane thieves and assassins. For example, thieves use the lockpicks to do the job. Not all adepts are thieves, however! Cavalrymen adepts don't just ride their horses, they "mind-meld" with them. Beastmaster adepts can grow vicious claws. Most characters will have relatively few skills in favor of these cool talents. Currently, there are 13 different types of adepts, including four varieties of spellcasters.

The game is based on a step system. At each step, the player rolls higher scoring dice. Dig out those d8s and d12s - you'll be needing all six dice again. To perform any task, find the step value for the attribute + talent for skill total, and roll the corresponding dice. Depending upon the type of task, you'll be comparing the value to your opponent's physical, social or spell defense.

Now, down to the second major point - does the system really work? To get a designer's opinion on the game, I spoke to Lou Prosperi, designer and project coordinator on EARTHDAWN. He's very confident about the future of EARTHDAWN. He commented, "A complete world with a story is what sells a game now. EARTHDAWN is a cohesive and integrated game, there's a reason for everything. Dungeons are explained, as are the traps and monsters that dwell within. But if the system is poor, the players will leave. I think this system will keep them there. You can play and tell a story at the same time - it's just fun to play!"

I think this is a fairly accurate evaluation. Even with the $30.00 price tag, the game is an impressive sight. This 300 page hardcover is fully illustrated by the usual crew of FASA artists. The color plates are a nice touch. In fact, if you can get your hands on it, the limited GENCON



edition sports extra color plates and a red, simulated leather cover with a gold logo. The game is prefaced with the usual FASA story and background, although both are a good read. The relaxed writing style makes it easy to follow.

As much as I loved the game, I have to admit that I had a problem with the organization of the game. Though not as bad as SHADOWRUN 1st edition, this does lead to some frustration. Some of the rules are needlessly scattered throughout the game. I felt I had to do too much flipping back and forth to review rules and specific talents. For example, rules for the use of karma (bonus dice) are spread throughout the book and rules on coinage appear in two totally separate sections. However, the game is well indexed, so this is nothing more than an inconvenience. Some rules seem incomplete. The rules on blood magic, a powerful kind of magic that draws on the user's life force, seemed more limited than the background originally implied. Other things, like using thread magic (see below) to affect people and places, are mentioned in passing but not covered at all. I asked Lou about this. He said that considering the size of the game - over 300 pages - some things had to be cut due to space limitations. He promised that these would be covered in future supplements. Fair enough.

The only thing I can recommend is patience. The book is crammed full of rules and details, particularly in the magic system, but everything is explained eventually. For this reason, it should be noted that, like SHADOWRUN, EARTHDAWN is not a pick-up and play game. It will probably take the GM a few sessions to become conversant with all the rules. Players should cut their GM some slack. It'll be worth the wait.

The magic system, as I mentioned before, is extremely detailed. Casting a spell is a very complicated procedure. First, the spellcaster must create a matrix, an artificial construct in astral space that holds a specific spell. Any spellcaster desperate - or stupid - enough to cast without a matrix risks injury and risks announcing his presence to nearby Horrors as well. Never a good thing. Unfortunately, a matrix may not be able to hold the entire spell by itself. The spellcaster may need to weave magical threads to the spell to complete the pattern for casting. Once that's finished the caster may attempt to cast the spell. Whew!

Magic can be very powerful, but players shouldn't go into the game expecting to play combat mages. It's just not going to happen. Magic takes time to cast, and beginning spellcasters have a limited number of matrices available, so they will have to choose their spells carefully. Reattuning a matrix for a different spell is possible, but it takes time. The process can different spells is possible, but it takes time. The process can be rushed, but only at the risk of blowing the matrix and having to start over from scratch. Personally, I think the system is fair. Some of these spells, like Razor Orb - just as nasty as it sounds - are very powerful and ignore the benefits of ar-

mor.

The use of magic items is just as complex. At each level an item will have a new power that can be mastered. To master that power, the character must first weave a thread (here we go again!) to them. That's the easy part. At some of these levels, there's also a Key Knowledge that must be learned before progressing to the next level. However, the sample magic items had key knowledges at some of the levels - but not all. What's a GM to do? Make up key knowledges? I called Lou. He told me the character can go ahead and weave the thread if there is no key knowledge for that level. The only condition is that the character must be a high enough level to weave the thread. Thanks Lou.

The combat system, unlike magic, is very streamlined. For the most part, combat is resolved with a simple attribute+talent skill roll versus the opponent's physical defense. Roll for damage using the weapon's step value and subtract the armor value from the damage inflicted. Some types of armor also protect against magic. Optional rules are provided at the end of the chapter.

In many games the experience system feels like an afterthought. I don't understand that. Designers work hard to create a distinct flavor for their world, and then they create an irrelevant experience system with no flavor at all! I think the experience system in EARTHDAWN works well within the framework of the game. As usual, characters earn experience, called Legend Points, with which they can improve attributes and talents, advance in levels, and buy additional karma. The cool part is that the Legend Point Total is used to determine the character' fame and status as heroes. The rules are designed so that heroes have a better chance at performing impossible tasks. Higher status has other benefits, like free room and board. On the other hand, people expect more of you - like ridding their town of a Horror.

I still believe that EARTHDAWN's greatest strength lies in its background . In fact, Lou's chief concern was that people wouldn't realize just how flavorful the world is. As he put it, "Magic is more pervasive in EARTHDAWN. Unlike most other fantasy games, you can walk into a store and buy magical potions. In fact, some of the archetype characters begin the game with magic items!" The game is rounded-out with a beastiary, a pantheon of gods, a brief overview of the major cities and regions, and travel rates and times. The details on the cities are limited to a paragraph of two a piece, but overall this is good stuff. The dragons of EARTHDAWN are probably some of the most powerful creatures I've ever seen - can these thing be killed? They obviously didn't survive two Scourges for nothing! In an interesting twist, some of the gods of EARTHDAWN, were driven mad during the Scourge by the influence of the Horrors.

I was somewhat disappointed that an introductory scenario is not included with the basic game, although there is a small section on designing adventures. Granted, most experienced GMs won't need this kind of coaching, but beginning GMs my feel abandoned. Fear not! Lou assures me that EARTHDAWN will be fully supported with new supplements every 5-6 weeks - not just rehashed SHADOWRUN material. The first supplement, the GAMEMASTER PACK, is already on the way.

One thing FASA is trying to avoid is the hackneyed dungeon-crawling, grab-the-treasure-and-run scenarios that marked the early years of AD&D. Although the introductory story is about a lost kaer, most of the adventure ideas are not. There's a whole new world out there to explore - use it!

To sum it up, I think EARTHDAWN is going to be a classic. The background is unique and rich with adventuring possibilities. The rules, though voluminous, won't take a lifetime to understand and won't turn an adventure into a number-crunching session. The game isn't 100% perfect, however. There are some problems, such as the organization of the rules. In addition, I would've liked to have seen more background in the basic book instead of having to wait for supplements. As I mentioned before, these problems are more of an inconvenience than an impediment, and can be excused considering the sheer size of the game.

I give EARTHDAWN an "A-". Check it out.

Writer's Note: As I was completing this article, the first supplement, the GAMEMASTER's PACK, has hit the shelves. I haven't gotten a chance to read it in detail yet, but it does include additional material on blood magic, NPC archetypes, and designing adventures. There's also a GM screen, new artifacts, optional rules and errata - including concise rules on the use of karma! ❑

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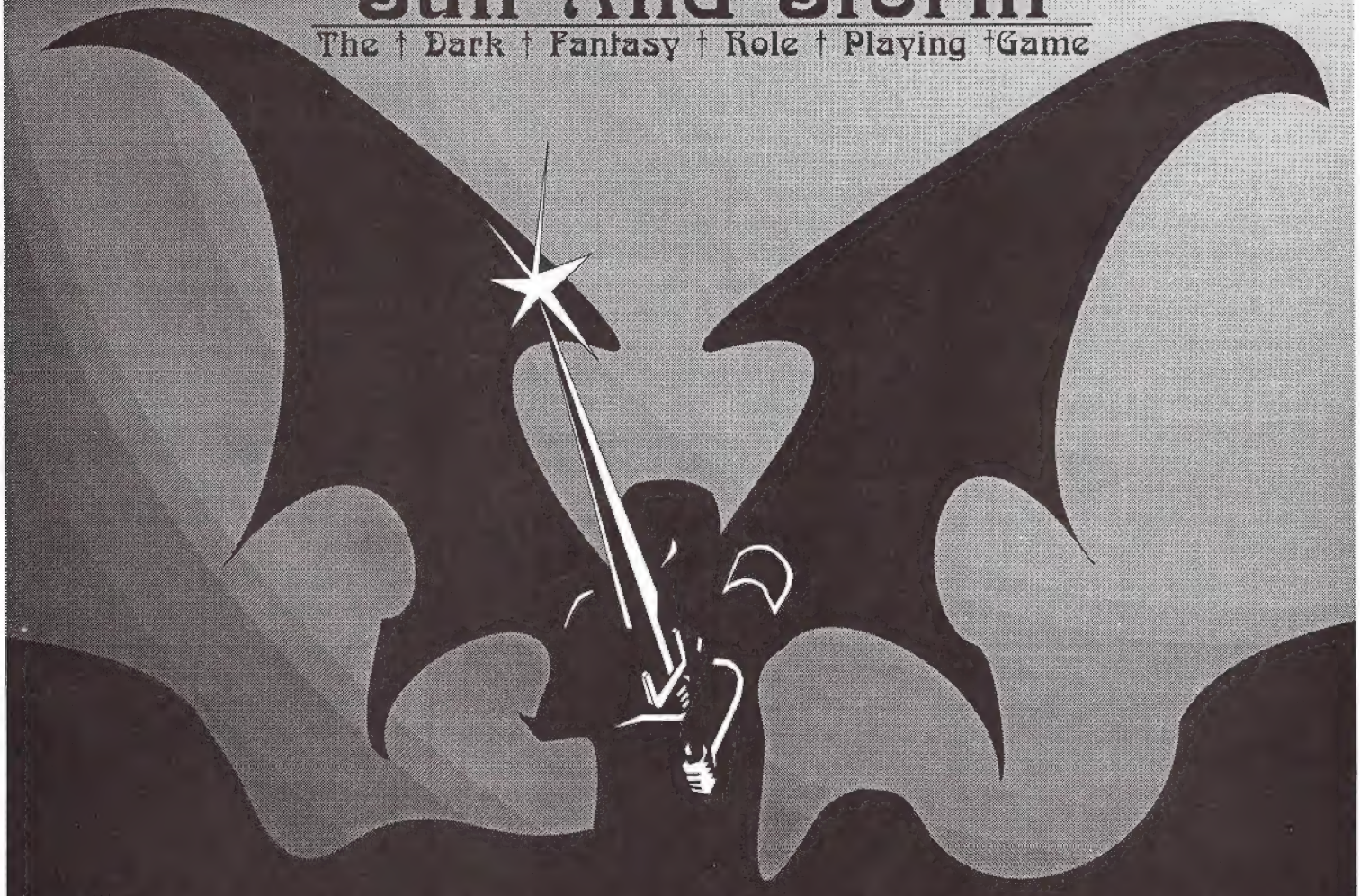

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"Book 'em Starbuck!"

Law Enforcement and Crime in the Future

by Frederick Goff

If you've ever run a science-fiction campaign, chances are you've spent at least one night tearing your hair out in exasperation at the seemingly endless string of criminal activities your players perform. These twisted psychopaths you call your friends during the day seem to get a perverse pleasure out of destroying the delicate balance of law and order you so lovingly established in your campaign. What's worse, they always get away with it and leave your cops looking like total buffoons. Up until now, the only way to stop those Freddie Kreugers was to throw a division of crack troops at them and bend the rules so far you could hear them creak from the strain.

Stress no more! The following paragraphs will give all the tricks and tips you need to restore law and order (or at least make it a force to be reckoned with) to your campaign. And, just to be fair, I'll give some tricks futuristic criminals can keep up their sleeves to outwit the cops who might be hot on their trails.

All of the tips, tricks and information given here were inspired by Journeyman, an SF RPG from Infinity Games. However, they should be generic enough to work well with any SF game system.

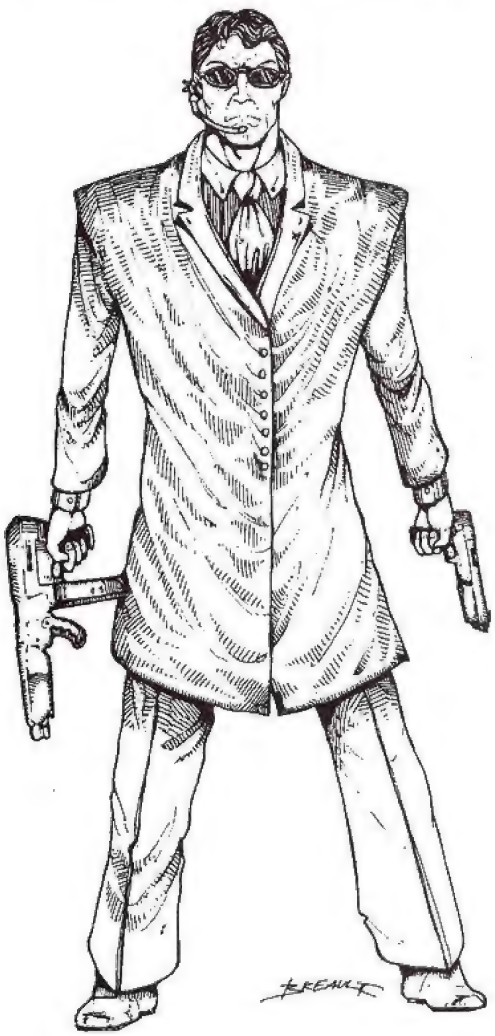
Let's look at some scenarios and see how our effective future-cops handle them.

Scenario #1:

You've just pulled off the perfect crime, and even better, no one saw you and you left no fingerprints. The cops will never even know who you are. Right? Wrong.

You better not leave a trace of *anything* at the scene of the crime or you'll be identified within a few hours. Forget this fingerprint nonsense. We're talking dead skin, strands of hair, even spittle or drops of sweat. Anything that could contain microscopic fragments of tissue can reveal your DNA pattern and allow you to be identified in a few hours by computer match.

Better be careful what you say at the scene of the crime as well. Microscopic scans of wall and floor surfaces can reveal the impressions left by sound waves impacting them. These can then be read by the proper equipment, allowing the cops to replay all the sounds that occurred at the scene of the crime for the past several hours. With computer enhancement and filtering, they might even get lucky and be able to isolate and identify individual voices



You also better be smart when planning your alibi. Future-cop labs will be able to pinpoint time of death to the minute by measuring the deterioration of cellular membranes, and they'll only need a few milligrams to do the test.

Scenario #2:

You've just cased a nice, juicy bank and now you're going in for the robbery. You're wearing a complete disguise and won't be touching anything you're not taking with you. This is gonna be just like a cakewalk and all those bank security cameras can take pictures until their lenses break for all the good it will do them. Think again, pal.

Even forgetting the ability to make a genetic trace on any sort of tissue sample, future security won't use anything as crude as simple television cameras. They'll have full-spectrum scanners and even if they can't see your face, they can still determine your race, approximate age, bone structure and skin depth. Any modest computer could reconstruct your appearance with 99% accuracy from this information.

Scenario #3:

"Well, even if they do know I was there, they'll never be able to reconstruct the crime or prove how I did it." Hah! Wrong again, you scummy criminal. After the lab people comb the scene of the crime, any good futuristic mainframe computer can reconstruct the crime and display it in vivid real-world holographic display right before the jury's very eyes.

Scenario #4:

O.K. You've done the crime and now you're realizing the cops will probably be able to identify you. No problem. You'll just jump the planet and go somewhere else. Better move quick. As soon as the lab boys have identified you, you can bet they'll send the data to every starport on the planet. And again, forget this nonsense about video cameras and plainsclothes detectives watching for your face. Starport security will consist of full sensor suites tied into a mini-mainframe computer. Not only will the computer automatically set the scanners for your personal signature (bone structure, skin depth, body temperature, etc.) it will also calculate all reasonable variations from that to account for any disguises or constructive surgery you might have done to yourself. On a good day, you maybe have a 10% chance of slipping past port security at a modern facility.

Let's say you do make it off world. Even so, you can bet that your troubles aren't over yet. Your identity is sure to be transmitted to every world in the area. This means you run the same chance of detection on *every* advanced world. How poetically just for you to squeak by port security on the world you were leaving just to get nabbed the moment you touch down on your supposedly safe new world.

You're only option now is to flee the region or head out to some primitive world where they don't have those spiffy and very annoying computer-linked sensor systems yet. But, even now, you're not safe. Those frontier regions are simply *thick* with bounty hunters and you can bet the cops have put a price on your head just in case you decided to hide out where you did. And bounty hunters have a reputation for not being too discriminating about whether or not they bring their victims back alive.

Scenario #5:

You've pulled off the job, but the cops are hot on your tail. Not a problem right? Just punch that grav car to top speed, do a little fancy maneuvering and you've lost your pursuers. But, just as soon as you get ready to floor it, your controls lock and your vehicle just hovers in mid-air. Nothing you can do will make it move and the cops come and pick you up as easily as a fish in a frying pan. What happened? Simple, the cops ordered your on-board computer to lock the controls and park your vehicle.

It's a simple matter to install an "authority circuit" in any computer system. This will cause the unit to give priority to any commands from recognized law enforcement or governmental agents. Most devices purchased in civilized areas will have these circuits built-in. Tampering with or removing the circuit, while possible, is very difficult and quite illegal (not that this is going to stop a criminal anyway, but it does give the cops one more reason to chase him).

If factories place authority circuits in

vehicles, you can bet they put them in robots. Will you ever be surprised when you sick your pet robot, Fido, on those cops hot on your trail just to realize that Fido suddenly acknowledges the *cops* as his owners and helps them chase you down!

Scenario #6:

You're a slick and sophisticated criminal. You know about authority circuits and have skillfully disabled them. Now watch those cops eat your gravitons. You punch the accelerator, grinning to yourself as you imagine the looks on those cops' faces as they futilely flip that little "obey me now" authority switch. You start to pull away from the pursuit nicely when, all of a sudden, you slam to a halt. All around you the air is heavily distorted and you can hear your engines whine and strain to the point of overload.

Cops today are not stupid, and ones in the future won't be either. If their authority overrides don't work, they'll simply call for backup. Its a simple matter to send a message to a police ship in low orbit and direct it to slap a tractor beam on you. Unless you're very good and can twist and weave past those stabbing tractor beams, you can kiss your freedom good-bye (get a good lawyer, pal).

It *is* a bit trickier if you've disabled an authority circuit in a robot. Robots are a bit more independent and mobile than most other computer systems and are generally too small to be nailed by any sort of ship-based tractor beam. However, if the unit is not hardened, a few good shots from an EMP (ElectroMagnetic Pulse) gun will be enough to turn your robot's delicate circuitry into so much sludge. If the unit is hardened and armored, the cops may have a rough time of it, and your pet robot Fido may be able to buy you enough time to get away from your current pursuers.

However, you are not so privileged that you get to be the only one owning a robot. Some of the cops on your tail may have some pretty nice robotic backup. You send Fido out to slow the boys down and he runs smack-dab into Arnold, the super-armored mega machine that you would loved to have bought, if you'd only had the money and knew that such a spiffy thing was available. Too bad, but

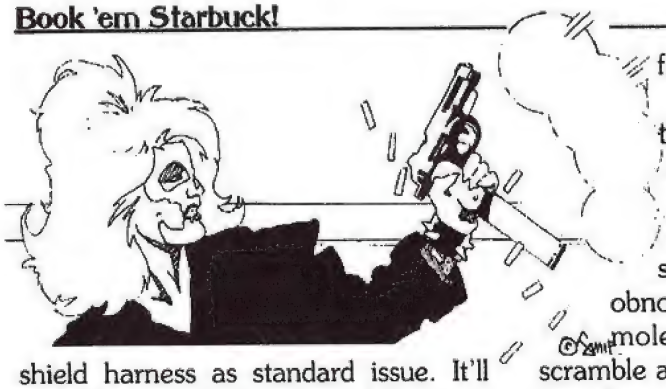
now you know the cops can get equipment that is simply not available to the average wanna-be criminal.

Scenario #7:

Okay, you're being chased and it doesn't look like you can get away. Fine. You'll just waste all those sissy cops and solve your immediate problem that way. After all, it'll be easy to get away once they're all charcoal.

Better be careful, bub. If you're going to blast your way out, do it quick. You can bet these guys are calling for help, and the better equipped you are, the more powerful help they're going to call for. (That pesky mega-machine Arnold will probably show up and turn you into Soylent Green before you can say Charlton Heston.)

You can also rest assured that the average cop in the field is going to pack a lot more punch than they do today. None of this nice little uniform stuff. Future cops (particularly those that expect trouble) will have body armor and a



shield harness as standard issue. It'll probably be a souped up shield harness to boot that can stop 20% to 30% more damage than you're used to. Forget that .38 special nonsense as well. Sidearms will consist of a hand disruptor and sonic stunner or neural pistol (just in case they decide they want to take you alive). And if things get real rough, they'll yank that heavy disruptor out of their grav car and proceed to make your immediate area look like certain brands of European cheese.

Oh yeah, don't be too cocky about that shield you're wearing. Most cops will have shield scramblers as standard issue. Not 100% effective, but it'll sure scare the liver out of you when they point it at you and your lovely shield begins to shimmer and collapse.

O.K. So the cops are good in the future. What can an aspiring criminal do about it? Well, a number of things. We'll go over them one by one.

First, how to protect your identity. The key here is don't let them find out who you are. Once you've been identified, it gets real tough to keep from being caught. The two main ways the cops find out who you are is from genetic matching and surveillance scans (say, from a bank security system). They can also try and get a voice print by lifting sounds from the scene of the crime.

It's just about impossible to avoid leaving some kind of tissue residue (unless you perform your crime in an environmental or vacuum suit), so the trick is to somehow prevent the cops from analyzing anything they might find. Good, clever, and successful criminals will use something known as a Gamma Flash (this very annoying device was invented by a nuclear engineer character in my campaign who had a decidedly twisted frame of mind).

The principle behind the device is quite simple. Once activated, the Gamma Flash releases an intense burst of gamma radiation after a preset delay. Radiation has the obnoxious ability to shatter DNA molecules and will effectively scramble any DNA samples that might have been left behind past the point of usefulness. Remember to still be careful about fingerprints and other archaic traces since the cops will use those if they have to in order to find out who you are.

Now, a Gamma Flash is not something you can buy at your local Adventurers R Us store. It needs to be built and that means you need a physicist to design the thing and a nuclear engineer to put it together (a nuclear engineer could design it as well, with a bit more difficulty). Also, putting in that time delay is important. Radiation doesn't discriminate and it will scramble *any* DNA molecules it finds, even if they happen to be the ones you are using to stay alive. Picture it now: the cops don't need to match your DNA because your corpse is lying right in the middle of it.

Preventing the cops from picking up any conversations or other potentially clue-providing sounds at the scene of the crime is so simple that most criminals never even think of it. Light off a few dozen fire crackers (or their high-tech equivalents) right after the crime. The resulting loud noise will obliterate any telling sounds you may have made during your crime. Unfortunately, the same loud bang that erases the evidence could also attract the attention of a lot of nosy neighbors.

If you're concerned about this or just don't like the idea of doing anything as *gauche* as fire crackers, you can build a tractor/presser device to run over the surfaces at the scene of the crime. This will basically flatten out, smash and otherwise deform all those lovely little microscopic sound imprints you left all over the place during your illegal activity. You'll need physics and/or nuclear engineering to design and build the device.

Overcoming surveillance scans. Again, you can use technology to beat technology. An operating forcefield will block most scans, but will itself be picked up (and bank owners might get nervous if someone walks into their facility with a fully powered shield harness on). A better trick is to design a scanner shield. Again, these are not generally available outside the intelligence services so you've either got to place some pretty good bribes or design and build one yourself. It takes a physicist or electrical engineer to design one and a nuclear engineer or electrical engineer to put one together.

Basic scanner shields simply block any scans coming into them. Effective, but crude, and may trigger automatic alarms (again, bank owners would likely get very suspicious of someone walking into their offices who showed up as a burst of static on their scanner readouts). To do it right, your scanner shield should intercept the incoming scans and send back *false* information. That's trickier. Now you need a dedicated computer wired into the scanner mechanism with a set of preprogrammed false readings.

A simple pocket computer will probably have the computing power to do the job and any electrical engineer or roboticist could make the connections. However, you need some clever programming to input the false readings and a biologist to tell the programmer what false readings are reasonable. You can skip the biologist part if you can lift someone's medical records. Just program those into the computer and frame the poor sucker for your crime. (It would be particularly poetic if you could nail one of those cops who busted you up so bad in scenario #7).

Your new deluxe scanner shield will prevent any reliable information being gained about you from scans, but you still need to disguise your appearance. The best bet here is to use a standard Chameleon suit and simply slip in a holodisk of some nobody the same general height and build as yourself.

If you're feeling particularly wicked, you can get a holographic recorder, take some footage of an unsuspecting victim

(most likely that cop whose medical records you lifted), spend a little time on a computer writing and running a program to convert your holographic footage into a simulation that can run on a chameleon suit, and walk in as the person you want to frame. Then, not only will your false scan returns give the information identifying you as your framed, you'll even look like him (or her, or it).

Using one of these spiffy shields can also boost your chances of getting through those obnoxious star port sensor suites (in case you were unlucky enough to get identified). Be aware however, that starport security systems tend to be a bit more sophisticated than the routine jobs you'll find in the Backwaterville Bank and may be able to detect and circumvent your shielding. Also remember that your false biological information has to be *very* believable or even Aunt Bessy's home computer could spot the anomaly and shut you down.

How to get rid of those pesky "authority circuits." Any decent electrical engineer or roboticist can remove an authority circuit without too much difficulty providing he has the proper schematics and equipment. However, the more expensive or potentially destructive the device, the better protected the authority circuit is. The authority circuits on a space craft are going to be a lot more difficult to remove than those in a simple stock grav car.

Also, be aware that some manufacturers get very annoyed at people who try to remove authority circuits and may provide for some very unforgiving consequences. A particularly nasty one that comes to mind is shorting out the device's main computer as soon as the circuit is removed. This is a real popular one with space craft manufacturers.

Sabotaging the main computer on a space craft is *nasty*. A space craft without a computer is worse than useless. How poetically just to be sitting in a 10 million credit ship where the most sophisticated thing you can do is flush the toilet because your Einstein wanna-be fried the ship's brain trying to remove the authority circuits.

A much more clever way to disable authority circuits is to forge some legitimate credentials making *you* a legitimate agent of the authorities. This is going to take some clever programming and some *very* good people in streetwise and forgery to get and fabricate the information you'll need.

The actual hardware needed to trip an authority circuit is pretty standard and can be grabbed at any decent electronics store. The real trick is finding the proper control codes and frequencies needed to trip the circuit. If you can get your hands on a few authority circuits, you might be able to figure out some of the codes. However, most circuits are programmable so that the proper codes can be placed in them when they travel to a new world. That means you'll need to get your hands on some circuits that have already been programmed for that world or area.

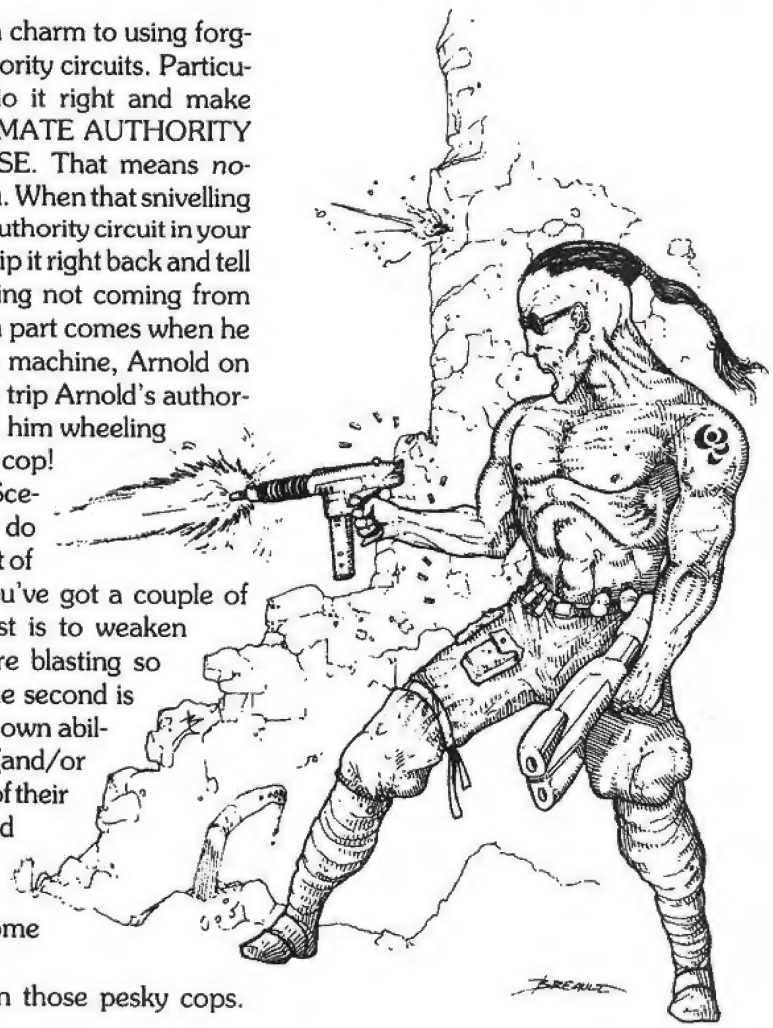
There is a certain charm to using forgery to disable authority circuits. Particularly if you can do it right and make yourself the ULTIMATE AUTHORITY IN THE UNIVERSE. That means *nobody* outranks you. When that snivelling little cop trips the authority circuit in your grav car, you just trip it right back and tell it to ignore anything not coming from you. The really fun part comes when he sicks his pet mega machine, Arnold on you. This time you trip Arnold's authority circuit and send him wheeling after your friendly cop!

Okay, you're in Scenario seven. How do you get yourself out of this one? Well, you've got a couple of strategies. The first is to weaken those cops that are blasting so unfairly at you. The second is to strengthen your own ability to blast back (and/or weaken the effects of their blastings directed toward you). Hopefully you'll be able to do both to some degree.

First, let's weaken those pesky cops. You can bet one of their top priorities is going to be calling for help, unless you are totally whimpy and pose about the same threat as a rabid hamster. Cops have a dear love of life that many hardened criminals do not share and will take extraordinary steps to protect it. (The prime one being to outnumber you by about 150 to 1.)

Cops will yell for backup using standard neutrino communicators. Furthermore, they'll probably use reserved frequencies that civilian communicators cannot use or even pick up on. (It actually depends on the world and society involved. Our society allows you to listen in on emergency and police wavelengths, but broadcasting on the same is illegal— at least not without a really good reason).

This is not an obstacle. Think of it as a challenge. Any decent electrical or nuclear engineer (nucleonics is the preferred skill since we're dealing with



nuclear particles, namely neutrinos) can modify a standard neutrino communicator to pick up and broadcast emergency and police frequencies, providing you know what those frequencies are.

Once you have the ability to receive and transmit on the proper frequencies, anyone with communications skill can jam the broadcasting cops' yelps for help. The ability to block the signals depends on the quality and strength of the equipment you are using as opposed to those being used by the cops. You aren't going to have much of a chance stopping a space craft's distress calls with a handheld neutrino communicator. Additionally, if one or more of the cops themselves has a communications skill, that can make it more difficult to jam their transmissions.

A second way to weaken those annoying and very aggressive cops is to build your *own* shield scrambler. You'll need a physicist to design the thing and either an electrical or nuclear engineer to build it (nuclear engineer is preferred since we're dealing with matter-wave fields, a nuclear phenomenon). You'll also need either a hot (by hot, I mean good and not stolen) program that can scan and interpret the opponent's shield frequency or a physicist near at hand to make the scan for you and tell you how to set your scrambler.

Ways to strengthen your own position. First and probably smartest: build yourself a shield randomizer. The GM *may* allow these to be purchased commercially. If not, you'll need a physicist (you've probably figured out that physics is a very useful skill when you're using high-tech) and an electrical or nuclear engineer. In this case either set of skills will work equally well since you're modifying existing circuits.

A shield randomizer will randomly (hence the name) alter the frequencies of your shield harness (or shield dome, or whatever type of shield you're using to protect yourself). There is a drawback, though (otherwise, shield randomizing would be standard). Constantly switching frequencies reduces a shield's effectiveness. So while it prevents the cops' shield neutralizer from working, it also reduces your own shield's effectiveness by about 30%. You need to decide whether the added security is worth the loss in protection.

As you can see, the possibilities in a science fiction setting are nearly limitless. Especially when the campaign or rules system is based in hard science (as is Journeyman). All of the techniques described in this article are well within the realms of modern scientific theory. Hopefully, you can use the information I've given to put your criminals on their toes and to make your cops much more respected. I've found from my own campaign that players are a bit more cautious and much more clever in their criminal activities once they found out just what the cops could do. Making your players think and use their imagination and creativity is what good role-playing is all about.

Good luck, good adventuring, and may your blaster never jam. ❑

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Dirk Debastion

By John Zinser

This 27 Year old Ular is a known space pirate. His base of operations is rumored to be somewhere in the Lambda Quandrant as he harasses all transports of that area. It is rumored that he works with one partner (a robotics expert) and a crew composed completely of renegade robots. He is an expert pilot and space hotdog. It is said, he frequents underground casino's where he regularly looses large sums of money.

STR: 22	**CON:** 20	**END:** 25	**DFT:** 18
SPD: 17	**LCK :** 15	**ALT:** 14	**INT:** 12
CHI: 14	**CHR:** 23	**BTY:** 16	

Combat Level: 19

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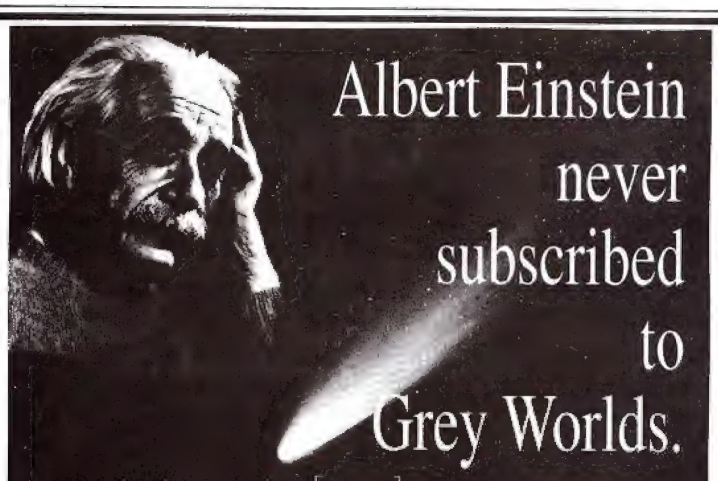

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GROD MONDRE
ARENA OF DEATH

A Fantasy Role-Playing Campaign based on Arena Combat

By Jolly R. Blackburn

Sageem smiled with satisfaction as he seated himself in the place of honor. It had been nearly six months since the Emperor had resided as Master of the Game.

Today was special and the crowd could sense it. They roared with approval as the Imperial banner was raised in the Emperor's box.

Sageem turned to his guest for the day, an elderly ambassador from Kal Dez.

"This is the glory of the Empire!" he boasted, "You can go home and tell that decrepit fool you call a King - that my people savor the sight of blood and combat!"

The Ambassador shifted uncomfortably in his seat and directed his gaze to the arena floor.

The gate on the north tunnel began to rattle as it was slowly raised revealing a large Grevan warrior brandishing a short-sword and wearing a simple leather loin cloth. The crowd exploded in a frenzy as the warrior marched to his ready position.

This was no mere slave who had been summoned to meet his death in the arena on this blistering morn. No, this was Tagula, the crowd's favorite champion. So far, he had survived 47 battles to the death; a tie with the standing record. The Emperor had already announced that Tagula would be set free if he proved victorious today.

The Grevan slave, lowest of the low, would stand alone as the most favored before the gods.

As Tagula anxiously readied his sword, all eyes shifted to the south tunnel. Who had been chosen to face him? The crowd roared with surprise as a pair of large Sturm-wolves padded out onto the field.

The wolves cautiously looked up at the frenzied crowd and snarled their disapproval. It was obvious the poor animals had been maddened, more than likely prodded with hot irons in their cages. Spotting the lone Grevan they tensed and sniffed at the air. Growling in unison they slowly began to close the distance with Tagula.

Tagula raised his sword skyward and said a silent prayer to his nameless god.

Sageem chuckled as the Ambassador leaned over the railing to get a better look.

"Poor Tagula!" the Emperor said with feigned remorse, "My money is on the Sturm-wolves."

Introduction

After fifteen years of construction the Grod Mondre, "The Grand Arena" is finally completed. Even as the workers put the finishing touches on the arena's decorative masonry, Arena-Fighters practice their deadly art on the game-field.

Grod Mondre is the largest arena ever attempted. Two legions and 2,500 slaves worked under the scrutiny of Imperial Engineers to ensure the arena would be completed in time for the sacred festival of Grongerfest. The horns are sounding announcing the start of the inaugural festivities. You are officially invited to take part.

Grod Mondre is a campaign setting simulating Arena Combat in the Ragean Empire. My intent was not to present a detailed, stand-alone combat system. Rather, I have chosen to present a setting in a generic format that allows the Game Master to use the combat-system of his favorite role-playing game. This generic approach permits players to use their favorite characters and allows Game Masters to incorporate Arena Combat into any existing campaign.

Some purists may accuse Grod Mondre of being a simple hack-n-slash campaign. However, besides allowing players to take on the role of arena-fighters, the real focus is on allowing players to become managers by investing their money and building their own stables. Rules are included for gambling, trading fighters, fixing fights etc. While two or more players hack it out in the arena, fellow gamers can busy themselves with upkeep on their stables.

The GM's Role

I should point out something from the start. This system was designed to mesh with any FRPG system. This means there are no system-specific rules or stats presented. The GM will have to do a little preparatory work before running a Grod Mondre campaign. Be sure to bone up on the combat system of the system you are using - if there are no rules for fumbles, dropped weapons, disengaging, etc, you may want to come

up with your own house rules. The GM will also have to come up with the stats for NPC stable fighters. I have simply indicated how many low-level, medium level and high level fighters each stable has.

With that in mind, let's continue.

The Arena-Fighter

At the heart of the Grod Mondre Campaign is the Arena-Fighter. These highly skilled men and women enter the arena for the amusement of the spectators and to hopefully earn their owners or sponsors money. Victory can bring fame, honors and for a few perhaps freedom. Loosing can bring only death, unless the crowd rallies behind a fallen fighter and the Master of the Games spares him.

Fighters come from all corners of the world and they find themselves standing in the arena for different reasons. Some are simple slaves, others are convicted criminals. Although uncommon, some fighters are free-men who voluntarily enter the arena in hopes of winning prestige and gold.

Character Background

Every fighter, both Player Character and Non-Player Character should have a brief background. Knowing how and why a fighter has come to be in the arena helps develop the character. If your players choose to start new characters as arena-fighters help them develop their backgrounds. It can make things interesting if each player keeps his background secret from other players only to reveal it through his character during the game.

The following is a list of various types of fighters;

1. Stable-Fighter

Stable Fighters are slaves that have been purchased by wealthy trainers for the sole purpose of fighting in the arenas and earning their owners a profit. Although they are slaves, Stable Fighters are treated well and pampered when they are not fighting. Of course they are required to endure rigorous training. (As a result of this intensive training, Stable Fighters advance to the next skill level at 80% of the normal experience points requirement, if the game system has such provisions.)

As a rule, Stable-Fighters are trained on one class of weapons. Occasionally, a particularly promising fighter may be cross trained in a variety of weapons.

The draw back of being a stable-fighter is that the slave is privately owned and no matter how popular he is with the crowds, cannot gain his freedom in the arena. As long as a fighter is winning and bringing in money, his manager is inclined to keep returning him to the arena. Most managers give incentives to their fighters to continue winning by promising freedom at a certain age (35 years of age is common) or after a certain number of victories. Champion Stable-Fighters may be retired when their skills begin to wane so that they may train younger fighters.

Not all Stable Fighters are slaves. There are exceptions. For example, many promising free-men will sign up with a stable as a Stable-Fighter. Typically, such fighters agree to conclude training and fight a certain number of fights for the Stable Master. At the end of the contract the fighter is given a sum of gold or property. It is also common for Family Patriarchs to order a black-sheep clansman to join a stable under such a contract to build character.

2. Civil-Slaves

Civil Slaves, (hereafter referred to simply as 'slaves') are owned by the state. Slaves are comprised of prisoners-of-war, convicted criminals and individuals born to slave parents. Slaves are used throughout the Empire in numerous capacities so normally only slaves who refuse to yield to submission are relegated to the arenas. A slave who performs well will normally be purchased at an auction by a Fighting Stable. Often, the crowds will demand a slave be set free if he has impressed them in combat with his courage and ability.

Few slaves have the benefit of the extensive training the stable fighters receive. As a result slave fighters die quickly. Slaves showing any potential in the arena are quickly purchased by the stables.

Starting an entire group of players as slave-fighters can be the start of an interesting campaign. Initial fights help to reinforce the game's combat system and help the characters to form their personalities. Later the players can win their freedom or escape. This common background helps to bond a group that would normally have nothing in common at the beginning of a campaign. If the players escape, there will be a ready-made back drop to the campaign as they keep moving to avoid recapture.

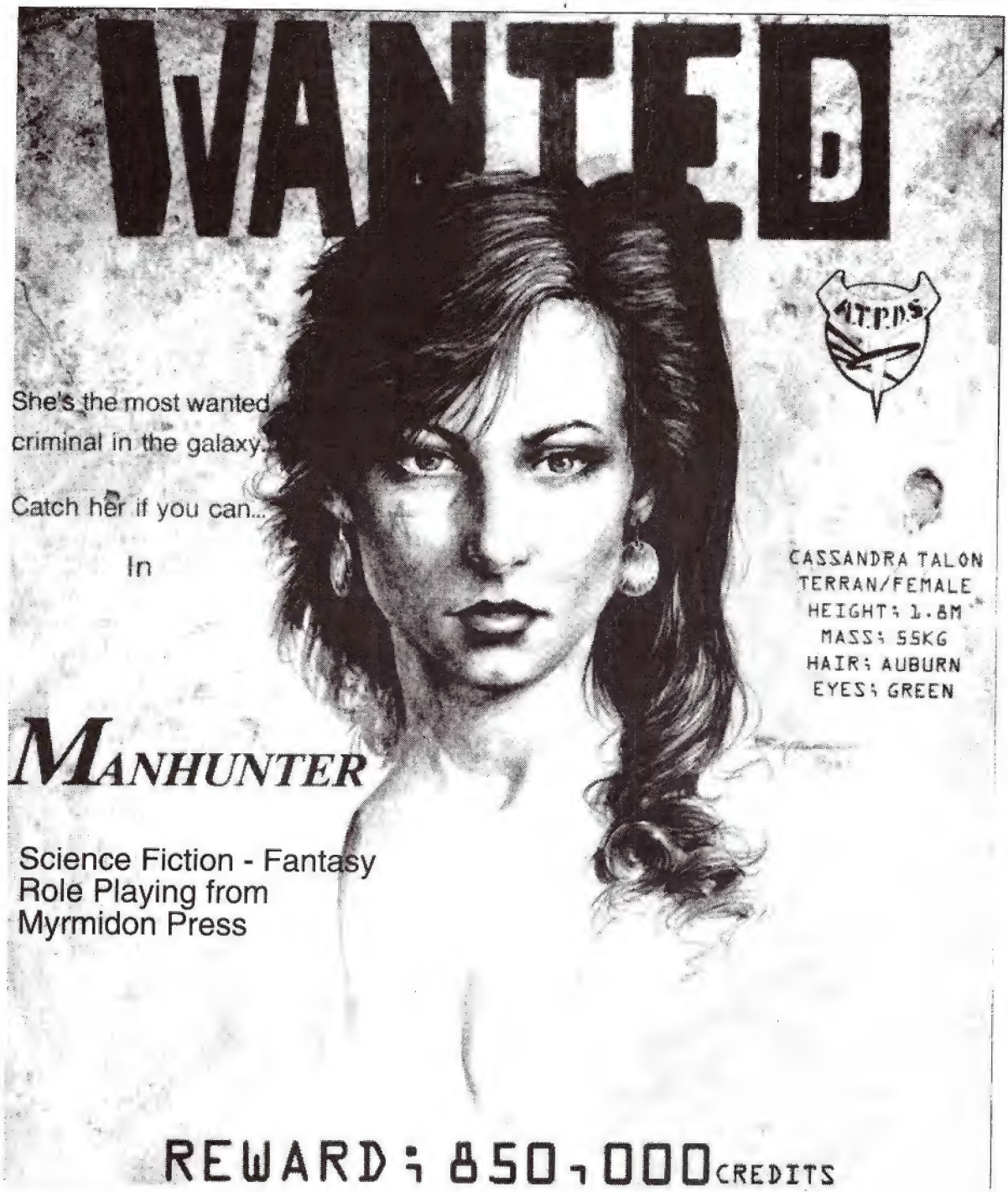
3. Free Fighters

Also referred to as Gandras (Ragean for 'Red Tatoo'). Gandras are free men who enter the arena voluntarily hoping to win cash prizes and titles. Many Gandras are former slave-fighters who were freed and chose to continue fighting independently. Typically several Gandras will join to form a professional stable. These groups or teams have colorful names such as Battered Fists or Clawed Fury. Winnings from individual fights are pooled in the Stable's treasury and members are paid shares based on the number of victories and seniority. Most professional stables have a 'Master'. The master is the team's manager and takes care of finances and places bets on or against his fighters.

Many Gandras have a red band tattooed across their foreheads. This tells the crowd that the fighter is facing death willingly, a source of great pride for this type of fighter.

4. Grudge-Fights:

Grudge fights are special events that are held at arenas on important holidays. Grudge-Fights are fought between two or more fighters who have a dispute that cannot be resolved through normal channels of the legal system. These fights often involve the question of honor. Tradition maintains that a man's honor, once challenged or lost can only be regained through the spilling of blood. In such cases the parties involved may select someone to represent them in the arena. The winner of the fight validates



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his side's claims and honor is restored.

New Stats

To run your favorite characters as arena fighters, you will need to add the following stats to your character sheets. These new stats help to record a fighter's success in the arena and his popularity with the crowds which both effect betting odds and events.

Fame (FA)

Fame is an indication of a fighter's renown. Fame goes up with victories and impressive feats. A high fame modifies events in a game. It can help a fighter to be spared by the crowds if he is downed. It modifies betting-odds and sometimes it can help a fighter to win his freedom.

Popularity (PO)

Popularity is an expression of how the crowd feels about the fighter. An unpopular fighter who is downed during combat can expect a thumbs-down. Popularity can also be a negative number. Fighters with a negative Popularity are considered Villains while those with a high positive Popularity are Champions. It may help to think of popularity in terms of modern professional wrestling. The crowd loves a good villain as well as a champion.

Victory: (VI)

Denotes the number of wins a fighter has in his career. Each number added signifies a kill or victory over a single opponent.

Awards (AW): Lists the awards and honors a fighter has had bestowed upon him. These contribute to fame and popularity.

Sway Factor (SF):

This is a fighter's ability to sway the crowd during a particular fight. It is temporary and begins at zero with each battle. As a battle progresses various actions and achievements by a fighter causes SF to rise and fall. A high SF can help a wounded and downed fighter find inner-strength and make a "Rocky" like come-back by temporarily regaining lost hit points. For Champions tremendous support from the crowds is important. For Villains, it is the opposite - these brutes thrive on the boo's and heckling from the crowds. The GM should consider the crowd's roar as a type of spell which can heal, build morale and otherwise help or impede a fighter during combat.

A fighter can begin a battle with an SF higher than zero if he has any awards or titles.

Awards / Titles

Awards are bestowed upon victors by the Master of the Games. While some awards can be rewarded at the whim of the MOG others have specific criteria that must be met before they can be awarded.

There are several types of awards;

Rings

These are not rings that are worn on the finger but rings of various color that are tattooed around the victor's weapon arm. Each Ring is only awarded once and becomes a permanent award. Rings represent levels of expertise and skill obtained by the fighter. Rings are often ordained with symbols and motifs of religious or social significance to the fighter.

Ring of Courage (amber):
+1 SF modifier

Normally granted to a fighter after his first victory in a death-fight and signifies the fighter's initiation into the brotherhood of gladiators.

Ring of Wings (red):
+2 SF modifier

Granted to a fighter who obtains a quick kill without taking any wounds himself.

Ring of Swords (blue):
+3 SF modifier

Granted to a fighter who obtains a victory while facing two or more opponents single-handedly.

Ring of Mastery (green):
+4 SF modifier

Granted to a fighter who enters the arena unarmored against a worthy opponent who is armored. This is perhaps the most cherished of the Ring Awards.

Laurels

Laurels in this case are small brass crowns adorned with copper leaves. On the front of the laurel is affixed a silver disk with a symbol embossed on it indicating what type of laurel it is. Laurels are temporary awards meaning they can be lost as well as earned. They are never granted permanently unless the fighter has been granted freedom or otherwise retires from fighting.

Yar'Mondre (First of the Arena):
+10 SF modifier

This is the highest laurel that can be obtained. Its wearer has been proclaimed the best fighter of the arena meaning he is the current champion. Once the fighter has accepted this laurel, (it can be refused) the fighter must take on all challengers pitted against him by the MOG.

Brae'Atain (Victor of the Running):
+8 SF modifier

This laurel is granted to fighters who complete the 'Running' meaning they have won victories in the seven consecutive games that make up the contest.

Vintis Kawn (Lord of Beastkind):
+5 SF modifier

This laurel is bestowed upon a fighter who has proven his mastery over animals in the arena.

Stables

There are hundreds of fighting-stables in the Empire. The majority of them are strictly small-time enterprises comprised of mediocre fighters. Only chartered stables can run fighters in the Grod Mondre and other municipal arenas around the Empire. After the Gladiator-Revolt of 32 TR an Imperial Law was passed that limited the number of trained gladiators a stable could have to 50.

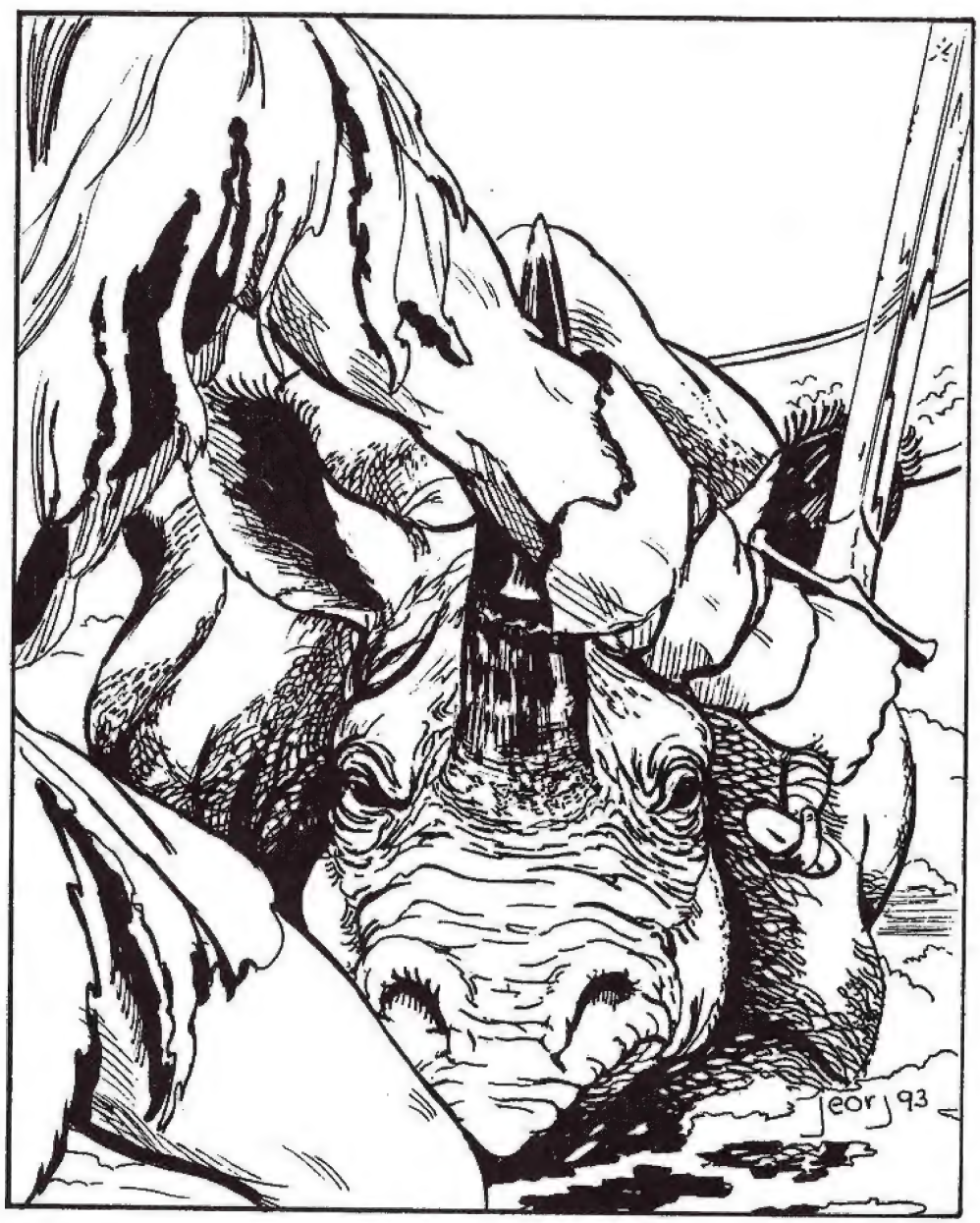
Stable Masters:

Stable Masters run and manage the stable like a business. They are responsible for replacing fighters and keeping the stable stocked with quality fighters. Although a Stable Master may own his stables, it is more likely that he is a partner or front man for owners who choose not to be involved with the daily affairs of running a stable.

The Stable Master controls the stable's treasury and works closely with the Head Trainer in chasing the elusive goal of training a champion fighter. It's not an easy job. Any match could ruin the promising career of a stable's best fighter. This keeps the Stable Manager busy, for he can never put his hopes on any single fighter. He must always be searching for that next champion at the slave auctions.

Head Trainer:

Head Trainers are invariably retired fighters. The fact that they have survived a full career in the arenas and lived to tell about it is testimony of their qualifications. All trainers have their own styles and techniques of passing on their knowledge. A good trainer is more valuable than the best of fighters. (GM Note: You should give trainers a Training Skill or something similar for the game system you are using. Such a skill indicates the impact their training has on other fighters. Including Player Characters who seek out the trainer to enhance their fighting skills)



Integrity:

Integrity is an attribute unique to stables. It is an indication of the stable's conduct and how far they will go to win. An Honorable stable will not resort to fixing a fight or cheating, while a Dishonorable stable would do anything to win - if the chances of being caught are low.

Prestige:

Prestige is perhaps valued more than gold by many Stable Masters. This is an indication of how the stable and more importantly, the Stable Master is viewed by his fellow citizens. With high prestige comes political appointments and social ties with the city's elite.

Running a Stable:

As mentioned before, this campaign was really designed to allow players to start and run their own stables. The stable becomes a business and competes with other stables. The following will assist you in getting your players started.

Starting a Stable:

In order to start a stable the potential Stable Master must have enough gold to purchase his beginning stable and buy a charter. He must have enough left over to purchase a training facility, pay a trainer and buy enough food and equipment to last a month. Many of these expenses can be minimized. For example, if a group of players are forming the stable then there may be no expenses for buying slaves. Also, if one of the players wants to be the trainer - he might waive his fee.

There are other expenses that cannot be cut.

Charter: 500 gp per month

Every stable must be chartered. This is a simple matter of paying the monthly fee of 500 gp to the city. A stable must have a minimum of 5 fighters to be granted a charter.

A charter allows a stable to be included

Grod Mondre Tables

Factors affecting Popularity

Ending SF from match	varies
Granted Mercy by opponent	-20
Accused of Cheating	-10
Accused of taking a dive	-20
Defeat a Popular Fighter	varies
Defeat an unpopular Fighter	varies

Factors that affect Fame

Defeat Famous Fighter	+50%*
Per Victory in the Arena	+1
Per Award/Honor	varies
Per 30 days without a match	-1
18 or greater SF during match	+1

* Fighter's obtain 50% of the Fame of their fallen or defeated opponents.

Mercy: Crowd's Verdict (1d100)*

Result	Verdict
01-80	Thumbs Down
81-00	Thumbs Up

* roll is modified by adding/subtracting fighter/team's Sway Factor

Mercy: MOG Verdict (1d100)*

Result	Verdict
01-90	Uphold's Crowd's Verdict
91-00	Goes Against Crowd

* roll is modified by adding/subtracting fighter/team's Sway Factor

Factors That Sway Crowd

Draw First Blood	+2
Each Fighter Downed/Slain	+3
Each Strong Hit Delivered	+1
Allow Opponent to Recover	+1
Outnumbered	+2
Underdog	+5
Reluctant to Engage	-3
Each Failure to Deliver Blow	-1
Fighting Dirty	-2
Failure to Yield to MOG	-3

Resurgence* (1d100)

01-50	No Effect
51-60	10% Recovery
61-80	20% Recovery
81-95	25% Recovery
96-00	50% Recovery

* Note on Resurgency Check: Only one check allowed is allowed per fighter per contest! Recovery is temporary.

Sway of the Crowd Scale

-10	-9	-8	-7	-6	-5	-4	-3	-2	-1	0	+1	+2	+3	+4
+5	+6	+7	+8	+9	+10	+11	+12	+13	+14	+15	+16	+17	+18	+19

GROD MONDRE COUNTERS

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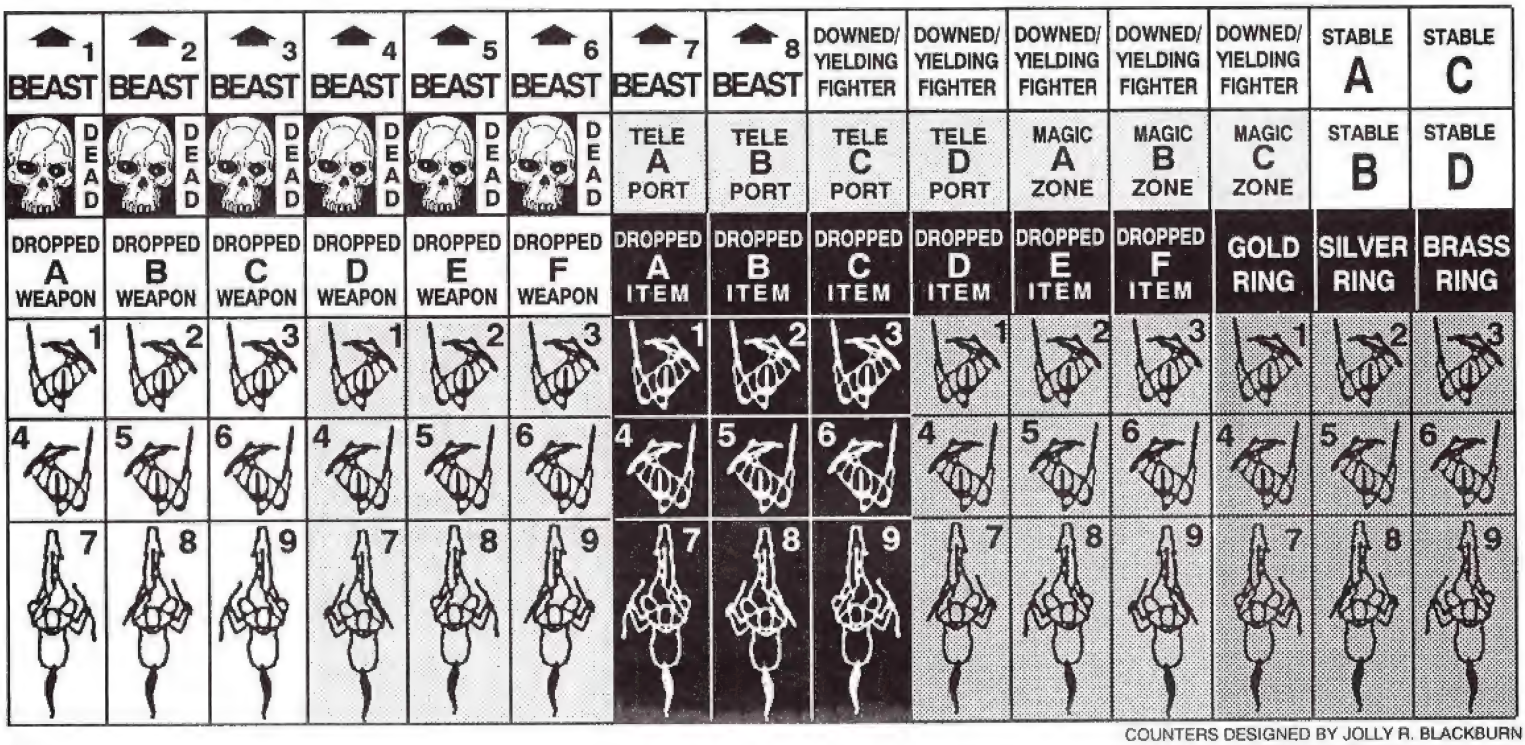
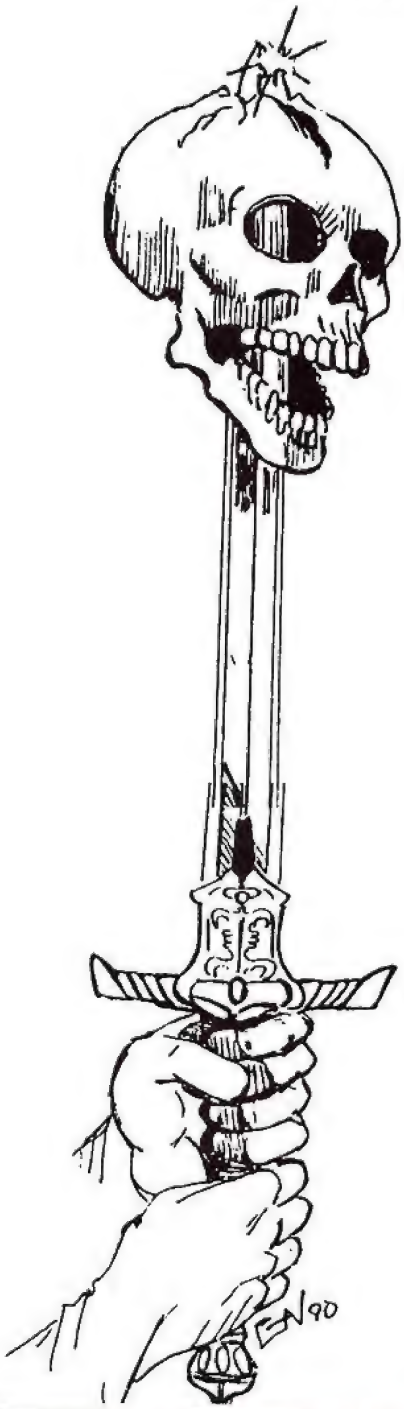


COUNTERS DESIGNED BY JOLLY R. BLACKBURN

Grod Mondre Gambling Tables



Determining Odds for Fighters and Teams

1. Calculate each fighter or team's ranking. (Popularity+Fame)/2+Victories

2. Roll for each fighter/team on appropriate Ranking Table.

3. Record bets and payoff amounts.

Gambling: Ranking #1

Result	Odds
01 - 03	1-5
04 - 06	1-2
07 - 09	1-1
10	Roll on Ranking #2 Table

Gambling: Ranking #2

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #1 Table
02 - 03	1-2
04 - 05	1-1
06 - 07	2-1
08 - 09	3-1
10	Roll on Ranking #3 Table

Gambling: Ranking #3

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #2 Table
02 - 03	2-1
04 - 05	3-1
06 - 07	5-2
08 - 09	4-1
10	Roll on Ranking #4 Table

Gambling: Ranking #4

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #3 Table
02 - 03	5-2
04 - 05	4-1
06 - 07	5-1
08 - 09	6-1
10	Roll on Ranking #5 Table

Gambling: Ranking #5

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #4 Table
02 - 03	5-1
04 - 05	6-1
06-07	8-1
08-09	10-1
10	Roll on Ranking #6 Table

Gambling: Ranking #6

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #5 Table
02 - 03	8-1
04 - 05	10-1
06 - 07	12-1
08 - 09	24-1
10	Roll on Ranking #7 Table

Gambling: Ranking #7

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #6 Table
02 - 03	12-1
04 - 05	24-1
06 - 07	36-1
08 - 09	46-1
10	Roll on Ranking #8 Table

Gambling: Ranking #8

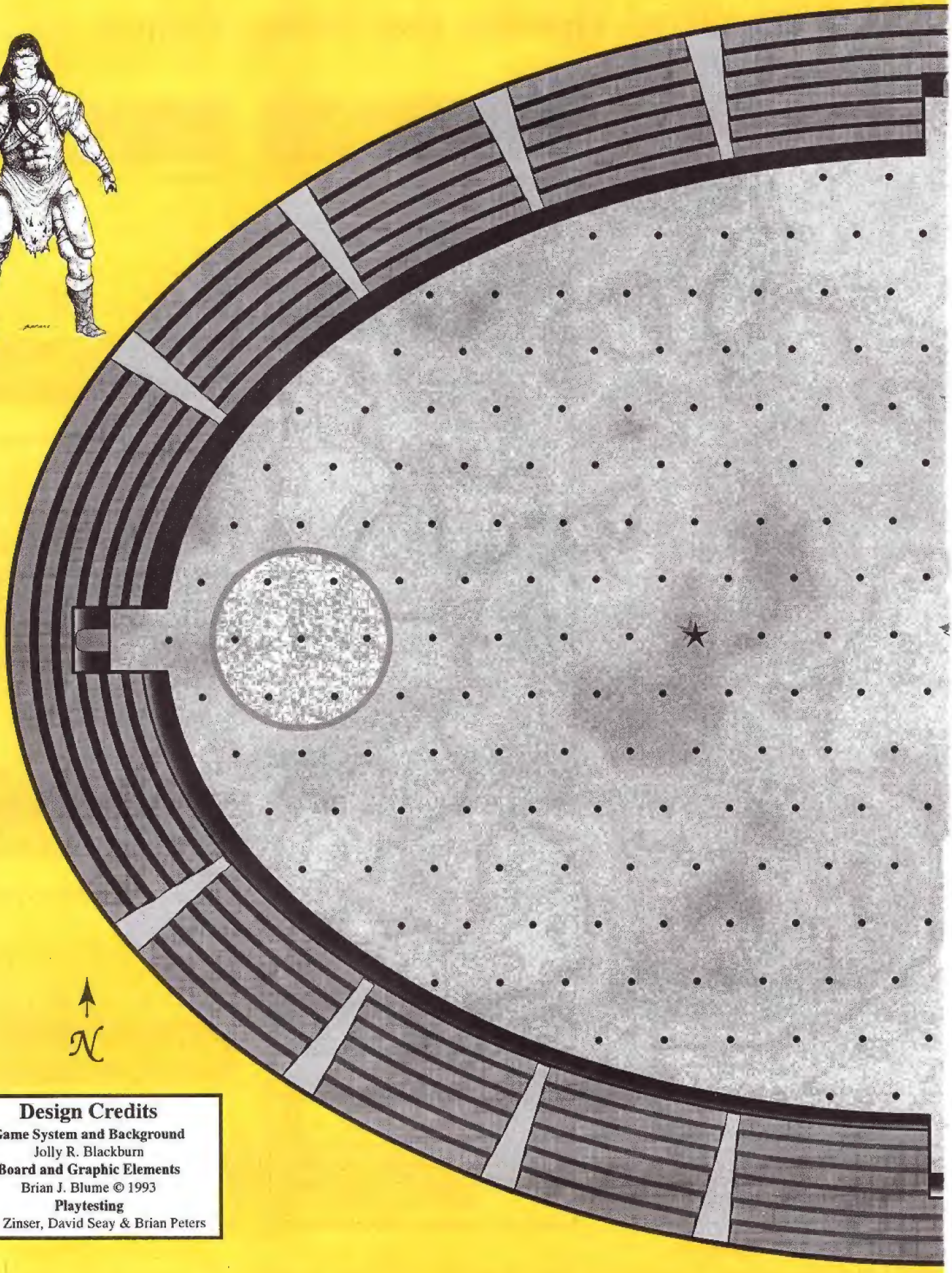
Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #7 Table
02 - 03	36-1
04 - 05	46-1
06 - 07	50-1
08 - 09	75-1
10	Roll on Ranking #9 Table

Gambling: Ranking #9

Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #8 Table
02 - 03	50-1
04 - 05	75-1
06 - 07	100-1
08 - 09	125-1
10	Roll on Ranking #10 Table

Gambling: Ranking #10

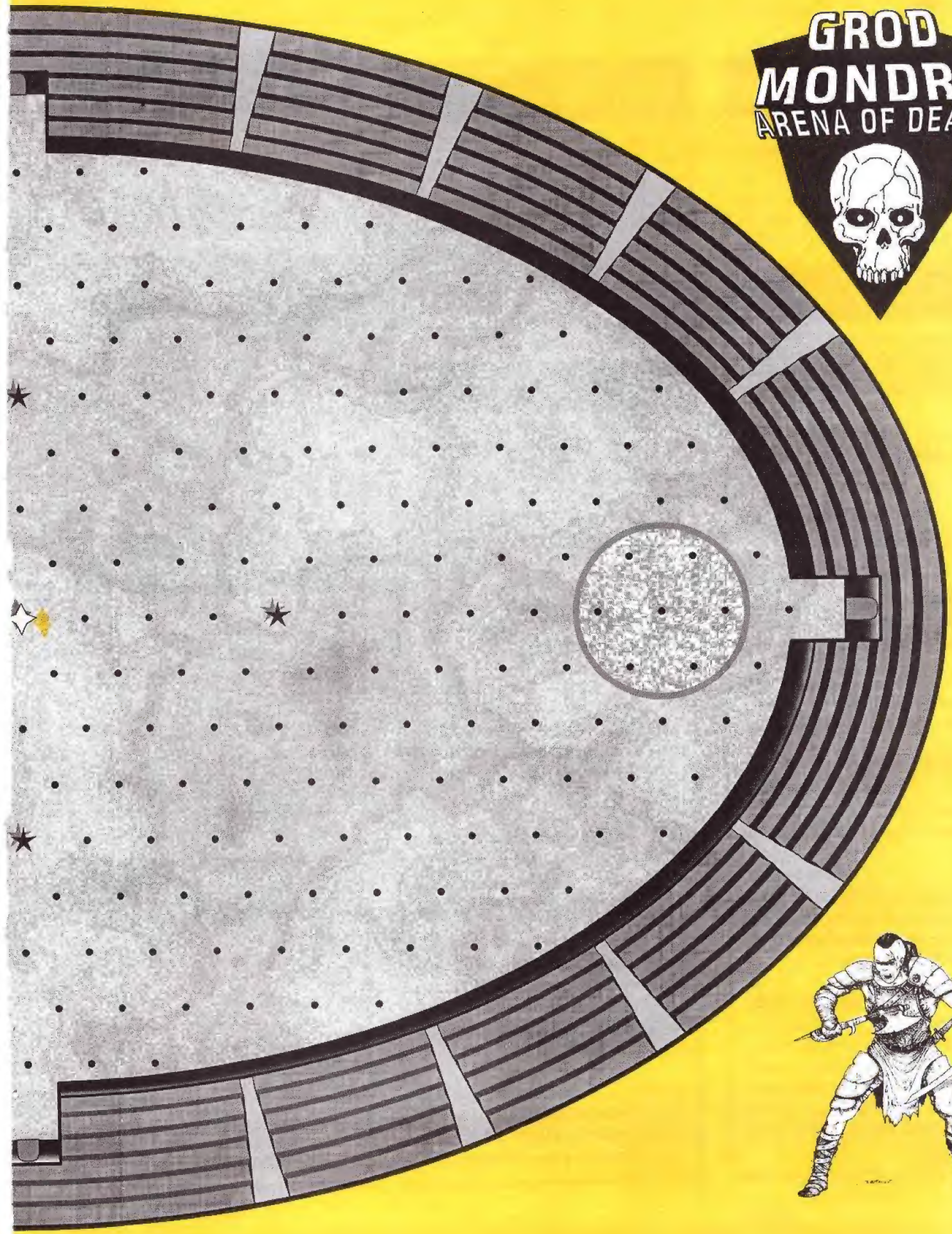
Result	Odds
01	Roll on Ranking #9 Table
02 - 03	100-1
04 - 05	125-1
06 - 07	150-1
08 - 10	200-1



Design Credits

Game System and Background
Jolly R. Blackburn
Board and Graphic Elements
Brian J. Blume © 1993
Playtesting
John Zinser, David Seay & Brian Peters

GROD MONDRE
ARENA OF DEATH



PURSE

Total Ranking	Purse
01 - 10	1d100 x 10 gp
11 - 20	1d100 x 20 gp
21 - 30	1d100 x 30 gp
31+	1d100 x 50 gp

* 500 gp is the minimum purse for a fight to the death.

MOG Fight Embellishment

Anytime all participating fighters in a match have negative Sway Factors roll 1d100 to see what actions the MOG will take to liven up the fight and appease the crowds.

01-50 ..... **No action taken.** Check again in three combat rounds.

51-60 ... **Activate Teleport Zones** Teleporting-stars are activated.

61-70 ..... **Release 1d4 Beasts** Wild beasts are released into the arena, forcing the fighters to contend with a new threat.

71-80 ..... **Begin next match** The next scheduled match is started with both matches running simultaneously.

81-90 ..... **Fresh Opponents** Fresh opponents are driven into the arena to finish off any survivors.

91-95 ..... **Fight is halted.** MOG publicly reprimands the fighters for a poor performance (-10 to all fighter's popularity) and has them dragged from the field.

96-00 ..... **Field of Death.** All survivors must face a fresh opponent. As soon as a replacement is killed a new replacement takes his place. This repeats till the original offender is dead OR the crowd rallies behind the fighter(s) and spares them.

Teleporting Table (1d8)

Result	Teleported to:
01	No Teleport
02	Opponent's Start-up Disc
03	North Star
04	South Star
05	East Star
06	West Star
07	Friendly Start-up Disc
08	Center Star

Angered Crowd

Anytime all participating fighters in a match have negative Sway Factors and the MOG has failed to take action roll to see what actions the crowd will take.

01-50 ..... **No action taken** Check again in three combat rounds.

51-60 . **Provoke MOG to take action** Roll on MOG Embellishment table and modify with +5

61-70 ..... **Fighters Pelted** Angry spectators pelt the fighters with stones and other items. (This distraction could cause fighters to miss blows and/or take minor damage)

71-90 .... **Fight Breaks Out in Stands** A small riot breaks out in the stands. Roll on MOG Embellishment table for immediate action and modify +10

90-95 ... **Spectators thrown in Arena** 1d6 Innocent spectators are tossed into the arena by angry fans. Roll on MOG Embellishment table and modify roll with +20

96-00 ..... **Riot Breaks Out** A riot sweeps the stands. The fight is immediately halted. All remaining fights for the day are cancelled.

Competing Teams (1d6)

01	1 Team*
02 - 04	2 Teams
05	3 Teams
06	4 Teams

* A result of '1 Team' automatically faces wild beasts.

Configuration: 2 Teams (1d20)

01 - 8	1 on 1
09 - 12	2 on 2
13 - 14	3 on 3
15	4 on 4
16	5 on 5
17	2 on 1
18	3 on 1
19	4 on 2
20	5 on 3

Configuration: 3 Teams (1d20)

01 - 8	1/1/1
09 - 12	2/2/2
13 - 14	3/3/3
15	4/4/4
16	5/5/5
17	2 /1/1
18	3/1/1
19	4/2/2
20	5/3/3

* x/x/x denotes the number of fighters on each team. Stables roll 1d6 with the highest roller gaining the advantage

Configuration: 4 Teams (1d20)

01 - 8	1/1/1/1
09 - 12	2/2/2/2
13 - 14	3/3/3/3
15	4/4/4/4
16	5/5/5/5
17	2 /1/1/1
18	3/1/1/1
19	4/2/2/2
20	5/3/3/3

* x/x/x denotes the number of fighters on each team. Stables roll 1d6 with the highest roller gaining the advantage

in the Pool from which matches are arranged. There is no guarantee that a stable will be slated for a match on every fight day! It may take a little palm-greasing to ensure your fighters make the schedule.

Free Fighters wishing to fight in the arena for a single match or a grudge fight must pay a 50 gp fee.

Training Facilities
(varies per game system)

Fighters must be housed, fed, clothed and trained. In addition they must have frequent medical treatment. Tradition dictates that each fighter have his own private cell. A good way for the GM to calculate expenses for running a stable is 100 gp per fighter. This gives you the monthly upkeep of the stable. (Be sure to ad in the Charter fees!) So a stable with the legal maximum of 50 fighters would have expenses of almost 5,000 gp!! As you can see running a stable is expensive.

Most stables fall well short of paying their full upkeep. They cutback in equipment, food and other areas. Of course this hurts the stable because the fighters are not trained and cared for as they should be.

The GM should use the Upkeep requirement as an indication of how well the Stable Master is doing his job. If he is paying the upkeep in full each month - his fighters should receive some kind of benefit. If he is barely paying half the Upkeep, it should show in the arena.

Trading/Purchasing Fighters.

Once a week the arena is turned into a market place where vendors can pay to set up booths and push their wares. The highlight of the day is the Fighter Auction. Here fighters are traded among stables and new fighters are bid upon. The auctions are very popular with the populace who turn out in mass to see their favorite champions and to get a glimpse of the Stable Masters as they haggle over prices.

Fixing Fights:

The arenas are crowded with nefarious characters who specialize in fixing fights. Their talents include the use of drugs, poisons and even assassination. Many stables employ such scum full-time. The GM should make the final determination on the success of such tactics and the outcome. Keep in mind that exposure could bring swift and harsh punishment from city officials.

Pit Fighting

Fighting for money is by no means limited to the arenas. In many taverns and inns around the Empire you can find 'Pit Fighting'.

A pit roughly ten feet square and ten feet deep is dug into the tavern floor (Wooden slats are placed over the pit when not in use.)

"Let my death come by the hands of a worthy opponent - and not by the wim of the mob"
Gladiator's prayer

Once or twice a month contests are held and locals assemble to watch men fight to the death in the pits. Side bets are placed and generally there is a decent purse to be had by the overall winner. Every tavern seems to have its own rules and quirks. I know of one tavern in Abos where combatants are blind-folded. A tavern in Fallen Oaks frequently tosses wild boars and jackals into the pits to liven things up.

When the Emperor Sageem was asked to abolish "Pit Fights" he scoffed and commented that Pit Fights were the "great breeding grounds where the best gladiators come to light." It is true that virtually all of the champion fighters in the arenas began their careers as Pit Fighters.

The Games:

Now that we have covered fighters and running stables, lets look at how the games are ran. Most of the tables you see in this article were designed to help run and enchance the games.

Determining Matches:

The citizens of the Empire turn out in mass for arena fights. To keep the crowds happy endless scenarios are constantly being devised and embellished.

To randomly determine who is fighting in a match consult the **Competing Teams table**. Roll 1d6 - the result indicates how many teams will be competing. Next roll on the appropriate Configuration table to find out how many fighters each team is allowed.

Scenarios:

The GM should use his imagination when coming up with scenarios. Generally, the Master of the Game will specify a victory condition for a scenario. For example, small metal rings which can be placed over the wrist are placed in the center of the arena and combatants fight for ownership of them.

Other scenarios include bringing fighters onto the field unarmed and placing a variety of weapons in the middle of the field. This results in a mad dash for the weapons and some interesting combat. (Check **Hook, Line & Sinker** this issue for adventure ideas for the Arena)

Gambling:

It wouldn't be a sport without gambling. Fortunes are made and lost in the Grod Mondre and players should be encouraged to get involved.

The system we have provided is very simple. Just follow the following steps;

1. Calculate each fighter or team's rank-

COUNTERS

Beast
These counters are used for various monsters and animals that may be pitted against gladiators. The arrow denotes the beast's facing.

Dead
Used to mark dead gladiators during combat.

Downed/Yielding Fighter
Used to mark gladiators who have either yielded or can no longer fight due to wounds and/or exhaustion.

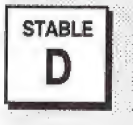
Dropped Item
Used to indicate a dropped item during combat.

Dropped Weapon
Used to indicate a dropped weapon during combat. Can also be used to indicate the location of weapons placed on Arena floor as part of the scenario.

Gladiator
Used to represent arena fighters on the board.

Mounted Fighter
Used to represent arena fighters on horseback on the board.

Rings
Used to represent gold, silver or brass rings on the arena floor. Certain scenarios use possession of such rings for victory conditions.



Stable
Used to chart Sway Factors for teams or fighters on the Sway of the Crowd Scale.

Teleport
Used to indicate magical teleporting-zones in the arena.

ing. Simply ad the fighter's popularity and fame. Divide this by 2 and add his victories. Compare each fighter's total and rank them from highest to lowest.
2. Now consult the appropriate ranking table for each fighter and roll 1d10. The result is that fighter or team's odds to win.
3. Record the odds and any bets placed by players.

The Crowds:

The fights may attract the people, but it is the crowds who really run the show. The crowds are loyal and come to the arena expecting to see blood. They are very intolerant and if the action is slow they will threaten to riot - something every Master of the Game fears.

The **Sway of the Crowd** is closely monitored on the Sway of the Crowd Scale. If all fighters on the board have a negative Sway Factor (SF) then the Crowd is upset. For every three rounds that all fighters have a negative SF - the GM should roll on the **MOG Fight Embellishment** table to see what action he takes. If the result is NO ACTION - immediately roll on the **Angered Crowd** table to see what their response will be.

To the Victor goes the Spoils

Eventually one fighter or team will be left standing in the arena and proclaimed victor. Roll on the **Purse Table** to see how much gold the victor's team receives. If the fighter/team has an SF of 15 or higher - the MOG may grant an award to the fighter. (GM's discretion)

Master of the Game (MOG):

The Master of the Game resides over the fights and ensures they are worthy of the gods (or more importantly of the crowd!). He literally has the power of life and death over those who appear before him.

The Emperor, himself, reserves the right to sit as MOG - but in actuality appears at the games only once a month or so. In his absence he appoints a close political ally or popular hero as MOG.

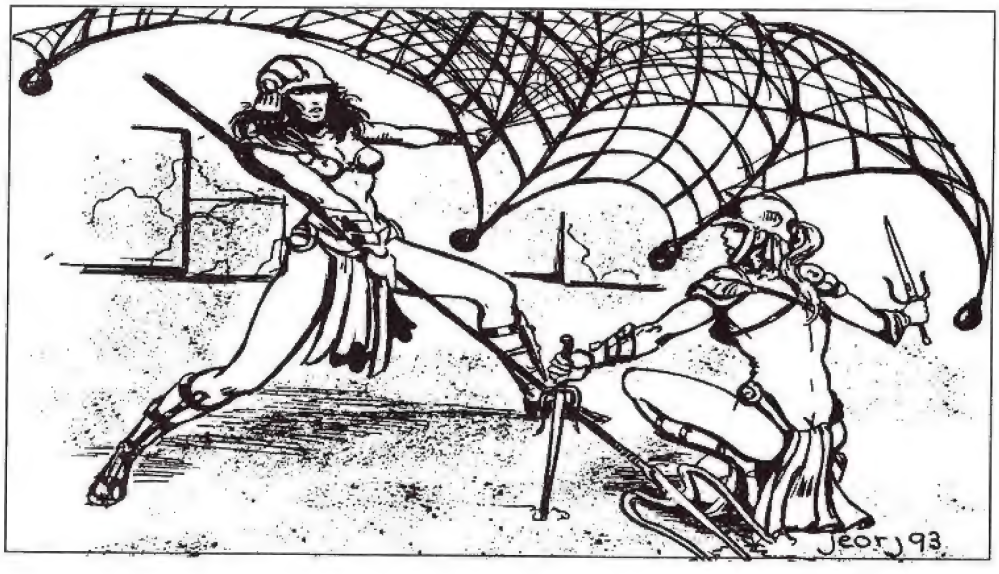
The GM should play the role of MOG himself and use the reigns of power to interject his own influence into battles.

The Game Board:

The Game Board represents the floor of the arena and its retaining walls. It also shows the entrance tunnels. A hex-center grid covers the playing area. (I use ten feet as the scale for the hex grid. Gamemasters may want to adjust the scale to conform with the rules of the RPG system they are using.)

Also shown on the game board are the ready marks (indicated by circles) and objective points (indicated by stars).

Before running a game for the players, the GM should pull out his rule books and run a few battles to ensure there are no rules that he will need to alter or create. Remember, GROD MONDRE is primarily a campaign setting. Don't be shy about tossing or incorporating your own rules if you feel the need. ❑



Mottled Blue Stable

Stable Master: Follian Grange
Head Trainer: "Patches" Ardian
Treasury: 5,850 gp
Upkeep: 1,200 gp
Alliances: Ragean Brotherhood
Foes: Gray Lotus
Integrity: Honorable
Prestige: Excellent
Stable LL: 24 **ML:** 15 **HL:** 8
Champion: Tardras

The Mottled Blue stable is one of the oldest stables in existence. It is sponsored by a coalition of politicians and wealthy merchants - whose identity is largely kept secret. Follian Grange is the acting Stable Master for the coalition though he is largely a front man and has little freedom to act independently. Follian started his career as a slave-fighter who distinguished himself enough to gain his freedom. After training several champions for the Gray Lotus stable, Follian was quickly hired by the Mottled Blue.

Follian actively participates in the training and care of his fighters. A few months ago an attempt was made on his life - it is suspected the disgruntled owners of Gray Lotus stable were responsible. The incident has increased friction between the two stables. It all came to a head during a match between two Mottled Blue champions and two Gray Lotus Champions. When the Mottled Blue champions were bested in combat, the Gray Lotus fighters refused to yield to the cries of mercy from the crowds and beheaded the downed champions. A riot immediately broke out in the stands and 87 people were killed or thrown from the arena walls. The Emperor was forced to close the Arena for thirty-days.

Follian's backers responded to the incident by pouring an unprecedented amount of hard coin into the stable - giving Follian authority to seek out and purchase the best fighters in the land. Follian opted to buy only a hand full of fighters with great potential and put the rest of the money toward the employment of the best trainers in the Empire. The early results have been impressive and the Mottled Blue has been rising through the ranks.

Jolly Blackburn

Death Embracers Stable

Stable Master: Patrar Devian
Head Trainer: Ponz Winlaff
Treasury: 2,200 gp
Upkeep: 700 gp
Alliances: Gray Lotus
Foes: Mottled Blue
Integrity: Dishonorable
Prestige: Moderate
Stable LL: 12 **ML:** 8 **HL:** 4
Champion: Kringe

The Death Embracers stable is one of the poorer stables which has fallen on hard times over the last few years. Patrar Devian has been managing the stable and is looking to unload it.

Patrar is unwilling to invest the kind of money necessary to make the stable competitive. Recently he hired a new trainer who is an expert beast-master and has been selling off his fighters and buying exotic beasts and creatures for the arena.

Ponz Winlaff, the trainer, has no fighting experience himself but is an expert animal-trainer. His reputation for training Sturm-wolves is known throughout the Empire.

Because Patrar is dealing with beasts now, he is pushing to become one of the primary suppliers of such beasts to the Grod Mondre.

Patrar has struck a very lucrative deal with the Gray Lotus. Beasts are actually trained not to attack fighters who wear a unique scent. Gray Lotus fighters smear a specially prepared paste on their bodies before entering the arena which carry the scent, thus enhancing their chances of winning. In return, Patrar is paid a percentage of the profits.

Patrar is now experimenting with training beasts to attack specific targets by means of a variety of whistles and other noises.

There is a persistent rumor spread throughout the stables that dead gladiator's are being purchased by Patrar to feed to his wild animals. The theory is that he is giving his beasts an acquired taste for human flesh.

B.A. Felton

Ragean Brotherhood

Stable Master: Matkief Te'Antium
Head Trainer: Talston Te'Shaz
Treasury: 7,900 gp
Upkeep: 1,800 gp
Alliances: Mottled Blue
Foes: Gray Lotus
Integrity: Honorable
Prestige: Excellent
Stable:LL: 5 **ML:** 15 **HL:** 20
Champion: Madrick Te'Baston

The Ragean Brotherhood stable is a new-comer to the arena. Over the last 10 years it has established itself as a crowd favorite and a consistent winner. The stable is managed by a former Captain of the Imperial Guard. He has set up a unique stable because all of his fighters are volunteers. A volunteer must take an oath that obligates him to a five year hitch in the stable. Upon completion of service fighters are given a generous share of the winnings they brought to the stable and a small tract of land. Many are immediately offered lucrative jobs as personal body-guards for the Emperor.

Ragean Brotherhood fighters are typically good to excellent fighters. They must endure the daily grueling training by Talston a former arena champion and a personal favorite of the Emperor. Although the rewards of being an RB fighter is very great, most fighters sign on as a matter of honor. They are dedicated soldiers who see arena duty as an opportunity to show their fighting ability and to represent the capital city.

Most RB fighters have the Imperial crest tattooed on their foreheads, proudly proclaiming their status. This pride is probably what makes them so popular with the crowds who see the RB as the fighting spirit of their city.

RB fighters hold honor above all else and this mind set is exemplified in their practice of refusing mercy or yielding to an opponent - death being preferable to living with defeat.

The RB's greatest enemy is the Gray Lotus stable. For years the two stables have been openly hostile toward each other - even going so far as to fight and brawl in unofficial matches, arranged in the late of night.

David Seay

Gray Lotus Stable

Stable Master: Darius Sagat
Head Trainer: Marcarl Broose
Treasury: 2,850 gp
Upkeep: 800 gp
Alliances: Death's Embrace
Foes: Mottled Blue, Ragean Brotherhood
Integrity: Dishonorable
Prestige: Terrible
Stable LL: 20 **ML:** 17 **HL:** 9
Champion: Sherana Te'

Darius Sagat is the owner of the Gray Lotus Stable. It is common knowledge that he is a crime lord and has strong ties with the city's thieve's guild. Despite his reputation, there has never been formal charges brought against him. Darius has strong ties with many senators and has always managed to bribe his way out of trouble.

Darius acquired the Gray Lotus Stable from a senator who put up the stable as collateral to pay off his gambling debts. Darius quickly realized that owning a gladiator stable could make him lots of money. The Gray Lotus stable is made up mostly of convicted criminals and slaves acquired through legal and not so legal means.

Unlike the other stables, who value their prestige - The Gray Lotus fight dirty and win anyway they can.
They have a reputation for never yielding the crowd's cries of mercy for a fallen fighter. Because of this practice, the Gray Lotus has made many enemies.

The trainer for the Gray Lotus is Marcarl Broose, a master warrior and veteran of the Arena. He is expert in the art of dirty fighting and cheating. He passes this information on to the members of his stable.

Recently the Gray Lotus has met several humiliating defeats in the arena, loosing some of it's best fighters in the process. Because of this, the stable has been resorting to even more desperate measures than normal.

John Zinser

Solemn Rage Stable

Stable Master: Rintus Durge
Head Trainer: Rintus Durge
Treasury: 17,200 gp
Upkeep: 13,000 gp
Alliances: None
Foes: None
Integrity: Moderate
Prestige: Moderate
Stable LL: 7 **ML:** 6 **HL:** 9
Champion: Yandrar

Solemn Rage is a very wealthy stable owned and managed by the acentric, Rintus Durge. Rintus travels to the fringes of the Empire to purchase his fighters. He only purchases fighters who already have had limited success in the pit fights.

The odd thing about the Solemn Rage is that the fighters are not trained or housed in the city near the arena. It is a closely guarded secret who the actual trainer is, though Rintus insists he trains all of his fighters himself.

In actuality, the fighters are trained in a remote fortress in the mountains with the aid of magical-enhancements and potions. If knowledge of this leaked out, the stable would surely be closed down.

Rintus brands each fighter with their own unique rune - the purpose of which is unknown.

Rintus is famous for his uncanny success in placing bets on the winners. He has a policy of never betting for or against his own fighters - so no one suspects him of any wrong doing. They just consider him remarkably lucky.

A strange incident occurred recently. One of the Solemn Rage's best champions was killed in the arena. Inexplicably, Rintus withdrew his fighter from all proceeding matches. For six months the Solemn Rage was conspicuously absent from the games. With the Solemn Rage banner was finally hoisted again over the arena, Rintus debuted a new stable of fighters - none of which had any arena experience. Remarkably, this new stable has been very successful.

Jolly Blackburn

Bitter Dogs of War Stable

Stable Master: Rungo Deviar
Head Trainer: "Chains" Charan
Treasury: 2,200 gp
Upkeep: 900 gp
Alliances: None
Foes: Death Embracers
Integrity: Honorable
Prestige: Terrible
Stable LL: 18 **ML:** 6 **HL:** 2
Champion: Hawl'Fang

This stable was founded as a personal vendetta against the owner's twin brother. Rungo was denied his inheritance for crimes he committed as a soldier in the Imperial Legion.

Rungo's brother is Patrar Devian, owner of the Death Embracers. Rungo was infuriated that his brother had used 'his' share of their parent's inheritance to purchase a run-down stable. Unable to obtain satisfaction through the courts, Rungo started his own stable around a group of aging gladiators who longed to return to the arena.

The Bitter Dogs have not been very successful in the arena. Despite Rungo's bitterness, he is basically a man of high morals and refuses to cheat or engage in any nefarious activity.

Rungo recently replaced his trainer with a retired fighter named "Chains" who has been whipping (literally) the stable into shape.

If things don't pick up soon, the Bitter Dogs may be forced to shut down. However, Rungo has high hopes his newest champion, Hawl'Fang will turn things around.

Chains stumbled across Hawl'Fang in a Pit Fight in a small tavern and instantly saw his potential. He convinced Rungo to invest a good part of his last stash of coin to purchase the fighter.

Now, Rungo nervously awaits the new season, knowing that it could be his last chance of revenge against his brother.

Rungo has offered his fighters a 500 gp bonus if they bring down and slay a Death Embracer fighter in the arena.

Jolly Blackburn

CLOSER LOOK

Reviews: Games, Books. . .

Title: Amber Diceless Role-Playing
Company: Phage Press
Category: RPG System
Reviewer: Dirk DeJong

Roger Zelazney's greatest creation has finally made it to the role-playing arena in Phage Press's **Amber**, a unique RPG based on the best-selling books. As with any new offering, especially those based on interpreting another's work, **Amber** is a mixed bag of the good and bad.

First, this is a very flexible product, designed to handle as much of the mythos as possible from the first Amber series, Corwin's saga. Even so, many of the author's interpretations of Amber are inconsistent with one's I would have made, especially in light of the second Amber series, Merlin's saga, which was not taken into account, though a planned supplement should rectify that. The game can be broken into four parts: background, character generation, items and artifacts generation, and conflict resolution.

Amber is a well-fleshed out world both in the books and the game. Zelazney's characters are truly brought to life, with the entire royal family being represented, down to possible motives, secrets, allies, enemies, and methods. And, to keep things interesting, there are various versions of each character, complete with differing powers, characteristics, etc., so your Amber will never quite be the same as your neighbors'. This helps in situations where you want a different character description for a major NPC than the single version most games provide.

Character generation is relatively straightforward, with five statistics — Psyche for magic and mind combat, Strength for unarmed combat and physical feats, Warfare for armed combat and strategic thinking, Endurance for endurance and recovery, and Stuff (Good, Neutral, or Bad), for determining relative luck. Each of these values is bought when you create the character, and can be improved. You can also buy powers, items and/or artifacts, ranging from the ability to Shadow-walk to creating swords like Greyswandir.

Item and artifact generation is simply that, creating new items and artifacts for your character to adventure with. This includes animals, sidekicks, swords and other weapons, or anything else you can think up. The systems for this are simple, elegant, and one of the high points of the game.

Conflict resolution is where **Amber** falls down. The designer felt that a truly diceless system was needed, and though the use of Stuff allows for a certain latitude in the interpretation of results, any system that relies on either simple subtraction or blow by blow role-playing for all conflict resolution has made the game both simpler and more difficult. While I don't feel that hundreds of dice rolls are good either; a system of this sort lends itself best to very good, very experienced role-players, who want to spend time being their character from the inside.

For those who are Amber fans, pick this up, it's the best sourcebook available for Amber. If you aren't into Amber, read Zelazney again, and decide if you might want to run a campaign in Amber. If so, buy this. If you don't like Amber, or aren't interested in an Amber campaign, then **Amber**, whose biggest plus is it's use of and adherence to the Amber mythos, is probably not for you.

Title: Gatecrasher
Company: Hot Tub Dragon Games
Category: RPG System
Reviewer: Dirk DeJong

Once more a small unknown has ventured into realms untouched or abandoned by the major publishers and come out with a game. **Gatecrasher** is the latest attempt to merge fantasy and hard Sci-Fi. Touted as a high tech/high fantasy game by Hot Tub Dragon (HTD), it's an amalgam of the innovative and the incompatible.

Gatecrasher's unusual genre can be used for almost any length of campaign, long term or session-by-session. Placed in our Solar System 100 years after an accident opened a gate between universes, it attempts to meld the opposing worlds of fantasy, with spells and dragons, and high-tech, with blasters and spaceships.

Gatecrasher's systems are based on Tech Levels (TL). There are three types: (1) TL Area (TLA), the technology that can be found in an area, (2) TL Magical (TLM), the highest technology that a magic-user's magic can effect, and (3) TL Restricted (TLR), the highest technology that can work in an area without acting up. The US is at TLA "L." At TLM "L," you could enchant your Mac. At TLM "D," you could only enchant your socks. And, at TLR "D," just try starting your Mac. Incidentally, a high TLM allows you to run over most technology with your magic, but the higher the TLM, the less magic available. Likewise, a low TLR can stop you from using high-tech to kill anyone with magic. The few places with high TLA AND high TLR, that don't shoot magicians, allow for a strange mix of magic and tech.

There are several character classes, each with advantages and disadvantages, but many disadvantages can be mitigated by proper character design. Character races range from elves and angels, complete with wings and halos, to cyborgs and robots. A bonus is that different character races get varying supernatural or special abilities.

For the techies among you, there's an adequate but limited list of gadgets. Still, all possible variations of each item couldn't be covered, so, if you want a difference between a TL "S" and a TL "X" blaster, make your own versions.

For magic-users, the magic system combines the expected and the unexpected. First, it's like the tech area — adequate but limited. Second, things like the supernatural powers of most characters, especially the elemental races, help make each character unique. And third, there are no cleric classes, nor real

alignment limitations, except for techies using magic and vice-versa.

The monster lists are average, but the Random Icky Things Table merits a special note. When you're attacked by 40 or 50 Golf Balls from Hell you'll understand.

On **Gatecrasher**'s downside: (1) HTD positioned it as a comedy game, but it's too complex and serious to ever be a real comedy game. (2) The difference between magic and tech is sharp, each hating the presence of the other. So, mixed groups have a limited number of places to play. (3) Techies can have a field day, as all penalties for flouting alignment only affect magical abilities. (4) The many rule exceptions, tables, and abbreviations makes finding and reading the rules for combat between a wizard and a starship trooper an exercise in patience. Granted, you'll learn the abbreviations and there is a listing of them; but the rules exceptions scattered throughout the book without organization can be frustrating. However, a promised errata section should correct the rules problems and ambiguities found.

Overall, **Gatecrasher** is a good first game from a new small company, better than many put out by the big companies. While not for everyone, the uniqueness of the system, limitations and all, and the attention to the details needed to flesh it out, have made this a worthwhile addition to anybody's collection wanting to have a go at playing an angel in power armor, or a spaceman with an enchanted starship.

Title: D.C.S. Basic Book
Company: David M. Fitzgerald
Category: RPG system
Reviewer: Tony Lee

Appearance-wise, D.C.S. is a plain, artless twenty-something page book. What your four dollar investment will return to you is a compact, uncomplicated generic role-playing system.

To stand out from the glut of generic RPGs these days, a system has to offer intelligent, distinctive rules. D.C.S.'s got that. Instead of random dice rolls or points, players allocate types of dice ranging from d4 to d10 among seven stats, and rolling the appropriate stat die for various feats, e.g. a character with Dexterity of d6 rolls a six-sider when trying to walk a rope or climb a wall, etc. Most notable is the "Special Ability" stat, an innovative catch-all trait to define any unusual ability the character possesses, be it magic, psionic, or even comic superpowers. Taking a page from popular games, predetermined Development Points are used to buy Advantages, Disadvantages, and Skills. All but a very few of these are easily understood, and some show real creativity on the part of the designer, David M. Fitzgerald (I believe D.C.S. stands for Dave's Core System).

To succeed at a task involves nothing more than rolling to beat the "Task Number." Combat is simple, seldom straying from dice roll comparison for to-hit, and rolling for damage. The Hit Points system, on the other hand, works on a multi-tier structure that takes a little bookkeeping, but nevertheless functions elegantly.

As flexible D.C.S. is, you may be disappointed to find mages confined to a rather stale spell list (clerics are regulated by a more interesting set of rules). As for comic book superpowers, well, you'll have wait for future supplement.

Overall, D.C.S. fulfills its promise of a good generic game that enables you to make a playable character during lunch. It's a small gem, and with more polishing and better editing it will prove to be a smart, inexpensive alternative to the prominent systems.

GENCON™ TREASURE CHEST

By Scott Johnson

One thing a trip to GENCON will do for a gamer is open his eyes to the wide array of games on the market. Most Gamestores can't even come close to stocking all the games and supplements available. We barely had room in the SHADIS mobile on the trip home, due to all the review materials we were hauling.

As many of you already know, we encourage our reviewers to actually play a product before writing or submitting a review. Due to the flood of products uncovered at GENCON, we've decided to run an overview of these products so our readers can see what's out there. Eventually, as reviews are received we will run them in SHADIS.

Of course, this is not a complete list of available games, just ones that we were able to pick up at the convention.

The Primal Order:
Knights Strategies in Motion
Company: Wizards of the Coast

This is the third book in the **Primal** line which offers a fresh new look at the use of Deities in fantasy role playing games. **Knights Strategies in Motion** takes three fictional dieties that can be plugged into almost any on going fantasy campaign. The book completely details these three dieties and how they build their organizations from top to bottom. Including worshiper life-styles, sacraments, duties of priesthood, and personality. background, abilities and responsibilities of the divine beings in each religious hierarchy.

Like it's well-received forerunners, **The Primal Order** and **Pawns**, The **Opening Move, Knights** looks as if it will be a great tool for a game master wishing to flesh out his divine organizations.

Legend Quest
Company: Board Enterprises

Legend Quest is a game that has been around for a while but we finally got our hands on a copy at GENCON™. It has received good reviews and deserves a closer look.

LQ is a fantasy based role playing game. The rule book covers everything needed to play, including character generation, magic, combat and a healthy section on monsters. We also picked up three adventures and two supplements for the game.

All were good reads and seemed to flow well. Like many small companies this game lacks the frills of some large press releases but **LQ** proves once again that it's not the cover and artwork that make a good game.

Star Wars Dark Empire Source Book
Company: West End Games

Considering I saw the original movie over 100 times I couldn't leave the convention without the latest Star Wars supplement. The long awaited, **Dark Empire Sourcebook** sets up the exciting continuation of the Star Wars saga. This book includes everything needed to continue the time-line that was brilliantly continued in Timothy Zahns Novels. The center of the book is graced with beautiful art slicks that hint at the quality of

DARKURTHE LEGENDS

Something new has emerged from the forges of the Black Dragon Press that has gamers taking notice.

Darkurthe LEGENDS Fantasy Role-Playing/Interactive Campaigning has arrived, a game that puts the creativity of fantasy role-playing back into the hands of the gamer, where it belongs.

The game's mechanics are wrapped together in an easy-to-learn storytelling system, which encourages gamers to be more creative (for example, the spell creation system allows players to build and create their own personal spell books).

So join us in the lands of Darkurthe, where deadly deathmasks and sinister warlocks roam the shadow lands, and learn what legends are really made of.

Future Products:

Legendary Adventures #1, Winterfest/Blackgate (modules)
Mithian's Book of Magic (source book)
The City of The Dead (source book)

FROM TRIALS COME HEROES,
FROM HEROES COME LEGENDS.

The Black Dragon Press, 520 N. 100 E., Suite #3, Provo, UT 84606.

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the rest of the book. What can I say? If you play the game you need this book.

Grace Under Pressure
Company: Pagan Publishing

Grace Under Pressure is a stand alone tournament style adventure for **Cthulhu Now**. The party plays one of eight crewmen on the RSV Wallaby, a deep sea research vessel. The book promises that this adventure is a departure from normal CoC fare, The objective is not to foil an evil plot or to destroy an evil menace. Rather, it is simply to survive. Of course this in itself is hard enough in a normal CoC game let alone 1500 feet below the surface.

Cyber Generation
Company: R. Talsorian Games

Loosen up and role-play! R Talsorian gives Cyberpunk gamers a chance to get back to the basics with this Dark Future supplement. **Cyber Generation** details character classes based on the children of modern day Cyberpunks. The future that they have to deal with is much different than that of their parents. These Cyberkids are outcasts being rounded up by the Corporate Security Police and fighting against Corporate Controlled America and the establishment. You won't find a lot of charts on weapons and guns in this supplement, but what they do offer is a full backdrop for a new era including; character classes, background, adversaries, skills and much. more.

Battlelords of the 23rd Century
Company: Optimus Design Systems

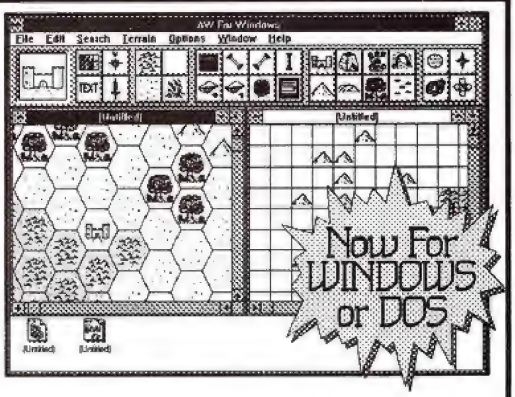
This Game is as intense as the boys who created it. If you were at Gencon you know these guys hardsell their game. It's obvious they are excited about their product and it's not hard to see why.

Battlelords promises role-playing in a "Dangerous Future". It looks like it makes good on that promise. The game books and supplements detail a world of the future that is caught up in an exploration race that is progressing at a fantastic rate. The system is set up to provide a gaming environment which is a mixture of role-playing and heavy combat action. Role playing and Hack and Slash. - What more could a gamer ask for? The system appears to be very detailed and written in a user friendly manner. You'll be hearing good things about this company and there are many future supplements in the wings.

Do You Want To Create Worlds?

Adventure Writer

is a PC compatible computer program which allows you to create detailed hex and square maps using a variety of terrain types, colors and text labels.



- Create Hex and Square maps up to 50x50 map locations in size.
- Text labels may be added to each map location, and optionally printed.
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- Print B/W & Color maps at 15mm, 25mm (miniature) and single page scales to most dot-matrix, inkjet, and laser printers.
- Supports Add-On Terrain Packs which each provide a selection of additional terrain types. The packs currently available include: Natural Caverns, Great Outdoors, Possessions & Accessories, Catacombs, Medieval Arms & Armor, and Ground Forces. *(Terrain Packs are available separately. Call for additional Information and pricing.)*
- MS-DOS & Microsoft Windows versions available. *(Please specify when ordering)*

To Order Send $30 plus $5 S&H to DIGITAL Alchemy, 11469 Olive Blvd. #223, St. Louis, MO 63141
or to order by phone call:

Orders: 1-800-566-MAPS Information: 1-314-447-8250

Mastercard, and VISA Accepted, Please Specify Disk Size When Ordering.

Legions of Steel Scenario Pack 1
Company: Global Games

This is a game that got rave reviews in SHADIS #9. We've been fighting over the basic set since it arrived.

Now that the first scenario pack has arrived the fever has intensified. The book includes at least 12 new scenarios, supplement rules for the game And play information for two new bad guys, the C1 Succubot, and G3 Predator. To even the score they also added a couple of good guys including the Heavy Assault Commando and Recce Commando. As usual the book has a liberal amount of cool art and includes new full color game counters and important quick reference charts. Lock and Load!

Mekton Operation Rimfire
Combat: R Talsorian Games

"The only thing colder than space is the human heart..." **Mekton** and **Operation Rimfire** is based on the popular Japanimation genre. The book does a superb job of capturing the look and feel of this unique setting. R Talsorian has taken the world of Algol, and put an entire animation series into it. The book includes great full color and black and white character portraits and quite a few adventure hooks.

Legendary Lives
Company: Marque Press

From the folks who brought you the classic, **Lost Souls** comes this fantasy role-playing entry which has been as equally well-received, **Legendary Lives.**

Legendary Lives offers the standard fantasy character races as well as few that are not so traditional. There is a more than adequate section on religions and information on the game world. Legendary Lives appears to be as creatively written as **Lost Souls.** It is definitely worth a look.

Where's George
Company: Avalon Hill Game Company

This supplement is for our editor's favorite beer and pretzel game, **Tales from the Floating Vagabond**. Like most Vagabond supplements this one is packed with extras. Don't expect a few maps and a simple adventure here. This supplement actually includes a board game that players can play while 'in character'. **Where's George** includes cards, play money, Win by a Mudslide board game,

and stats for your favorite political personalities. Just because the real presidential election is over, that shouldn't steer you away from this supplement.

Kult
Company: Metropolis Ltd.

"Warning: Kult is game that explores the dark side of the human soul; Some may find this disturbing. Kult is not recommended for players under 16."
Any game that runs such a disclaimer on its back cover is bound to draw attention. The question of course is whether or not you choose to ignore the warning and proceed..

If you are looking to step beyond the realms of conventional gaming, **Kult** may be for you. Within the game industry Kult is getting its fair share of rave reviews at being a ground breaking new system.

You play a character in a world that is dark and dangerous, where nothing is what it seems to be. Based in a modern day setting, you will find that our reality is an illusion and that the real world is ruled by creatures who hide behind a false fasade. Of course behind these illusions is where the true adventure and the truth can be found. If you dare to disbelieve the conventional...

Wizards
Company: Whit Publications

Ralph Bakshi's cult-classic movie **Wizards** came out just about the time I started my foray into gaming. Even before I was a hard core gamer I was a fan.

Whit Publications has recreated this post Holocaust animated world in the role-playing game Wizards. The basic rule book provides the backdrop familiar to fans of the movie. Unlike some role-playing games on the market, Whit promises and appears to be delivering plenty of support material to make this product more than just a movie knock off. 11 Products by the end of this year! Unfortunately we do not have them at our disposal, but the game itself seems to have everything needed to run a successful campaign.

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MICHELLE BELANGER, EDITOR
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SASE FOR GUIDELINES

GURPS Vehicles
Company: Steve Jackson Games

This supplement is packed. If you can ride in it or drive it - you'll find it here. Everything from Chariots to Cybertanks, Hot Air -Balloons to Jets. The book also allows you to asscesorize your vehicle and equip it with weapons and defences. Additional GURPS combat rules for vehicles and vehicle actions are also covered. Over 200 pages to keep any die-hard GURPS player happy.

The Lawnmower Man
Company: Leading Edge Games

When Leading Edge Games acquired the rights to **Aliens,** I thought it was a brilliant move. But **Lawn Mower Man**? Let's just say I was skeptical. In fact this book sat on the shelf for a while before I got around to giving it a read through.

As it turns out **The Lawnmower Man** is not just a movie knock off but a complete Virtual Realty Role-playing System. The movie provides the background for the beginning of the adventure. The Lawnmower Man's Transformation into Cyberjobe ,a virtual reality creature, has started the war for Virtual Reality. As the Virtuality War is spreading through the Dragnet and around the globe. Governments, corporations, and individuals are waging battles against each other and Cyberjobe for control of the latest Virtual Technologies. You have joined this war and must use Espionage, conventional weapons and Virtual Reality abilities to stop Cyberjobe and determine the outcome of the war.

This game covers some new ground and provides some fascinating adventure opportunities.

Hahlmabrea
Company: Sutton Hoo Games

Enter the world of **Hahlambrea**, where culture dictates behavior and the council guides adventurers through their journeys. (Permits or licence required of course). The game designers of Hahlambrea promise an easy to use system with less hassle and more enjoyment for players.

In **Hahlambrea**, adventuring is a profession and while there are some exceptions, licensed adventurers are respected. A full year of adventuring is necessary to become licensed. What are you waiting for an invitation? Get on that horse, adventure awaits.

Manhunter
Company: Myrmidon Press

Some game systems just have a great premise - Bountyhunter is one of those games.

Set in the far future **Bounty Hun**[illegible] more than just bounty hunting. The Bounty Hunter rule book gives you a good background and world to begin your adventures and contrary to the title you do not have to be a bounty hunter, although playing one is the real attraction of this game.

The Game allows players to run one of many races or play a robot, which one of my reviewers tells me is a bonus to this very good game system. The bounty hunter game book covers everything that many other games take 5 or 6 supplements to cover. The system allows for fast paced and exciting play.

Adventure Maximum
Company: Worldmaster Designs

Hard rules for a multigenre role-playing system! This book covers everything expected in a basic system - character creation, skills, weapons, magic etc. The game boasts a combat system which is claimed to be 'visual', giving the player the advantages of a good combat system while allowing him to visualize what is actually occurring. The book is cram packed with information and game charts. Enough to fill any gamers multi genre needs.

Jovian Chronicles
Company: Ianus Games

Jovian Chronicles is a supplement for R Talsorian Games **Mekton**. This sourcebook was inspired by Japanimation and takes you beyond the confines of planet earth into a solar system on the brink of war.

Jovian Chronicles is laid out in a way that is very pleasing to the eye and if you like Japanimation there is plenty within. The book seems to give you a good balance of Characters and high tech machinery. As well as background information.

Shatterzone
Company: West End Games

"Space is big... Life is hard."

Shatterzone is a West End Game's latest entry to the sci-fi genre based on the popular paperback series fo the same name. The Boxed game includes three books; a players guide, universe guide and rule book. Also dice and 2 card decks.

Like most of West End Games products this one is a slick, sharp package. Shatterzone is no space opera. Your character is thrown into a very harsh and real world where mistakes can easily mean your death or the

death of your comrades. The rules leave enough room for GM development but also give good guidelines for play. The first supplement adventure **Brain Burn** comes with a great adventure and those all important GM screens.

Abalone
Company: Galoob

One of the busiest booths at Gencon was the Abalone booth. Abalone is a simple enough looking game. At first glance the game looks like a Marble jump game but you quickly learn that the board is set up so that the marbles can be pushed by rows. The object of the game is for one player to push his opponent's marbles off the playing board. To do this you must move your marbles into a position where you have more in a line than your opponent. Abalone is a fun thinking man's game that is simple to learn but requires extensive play to master.

Sun and Storm
Company: Storm Press

"In an embattled universe, space is a sea of storms, stars and motes of sun, and worlds are terrariums for immortal wyrms."

In these worlds, magic breeds technology, and humanity struggles to survive against overwhelming odds. Sun and Storm does not promise riches and fame for your characters, but a struggle in a world that has been torn apart by a battle of powers beyond the scope of man. Not only are characters struggling to survive but as with any game worth its merit, they are also trying to find a way to bring peace back to their world.

Available is a players handbook (the Enchiridion), a GM's Guide (The Codex), and what I would consider to be a mandatory addition to any game system, a GM Screen.

If you're looking for something a little more dangerous than your standard role playing game, *"Quit Whining and pick up your sword.™"*

MAPS Book 1 Cities
Company: Flying Buffalo

Flying Buffalo's **Catalyst** series has brought GMs generic campaign settings to drop into any fantasy role-playing game for quite a while. The latest in the series, **MAPS Book 1 Cities** gives GMs the core of over 20 mapped cities and locations. They range from islands to palaces and circuses to hidden underground tree cities. Each map has a detailed list of all the major places of interest and adventure seeds to help the GM.

The World of Synnibarr
Company: Wonder World Press

This is a monster of a book! For $29.95 you get well over 400 Pages of rules! (50 character classes and 1000 spells, mutations, psionics, and special abilities.) The book also includes instructions for engineering your own powers and details the game world with more than 300 characters and monster types. The **World of Synnibarr** is a complete multi genre role-playing system. As a small press game,it has held it's own in some stores with the big boys. It's one of those games that has thrived on 'word of mouth' converts.

Timetracker™ Deluxe
Company: Britton Designs

Imagine role-playing your favorite game, but there is no such thing as a round, just seconds minutes hours, days etc. With the use of a grease pencil the **Time Tracker** allows the GM to keep track of all actions going on in a game including spell casting, movement and attacks, down to the exact second.

The Time Tracker can help solve disputes on "who can do what" by keeping track of actions that may even take days. If you are a meticulous player who wants detail in his game this is a product for you.

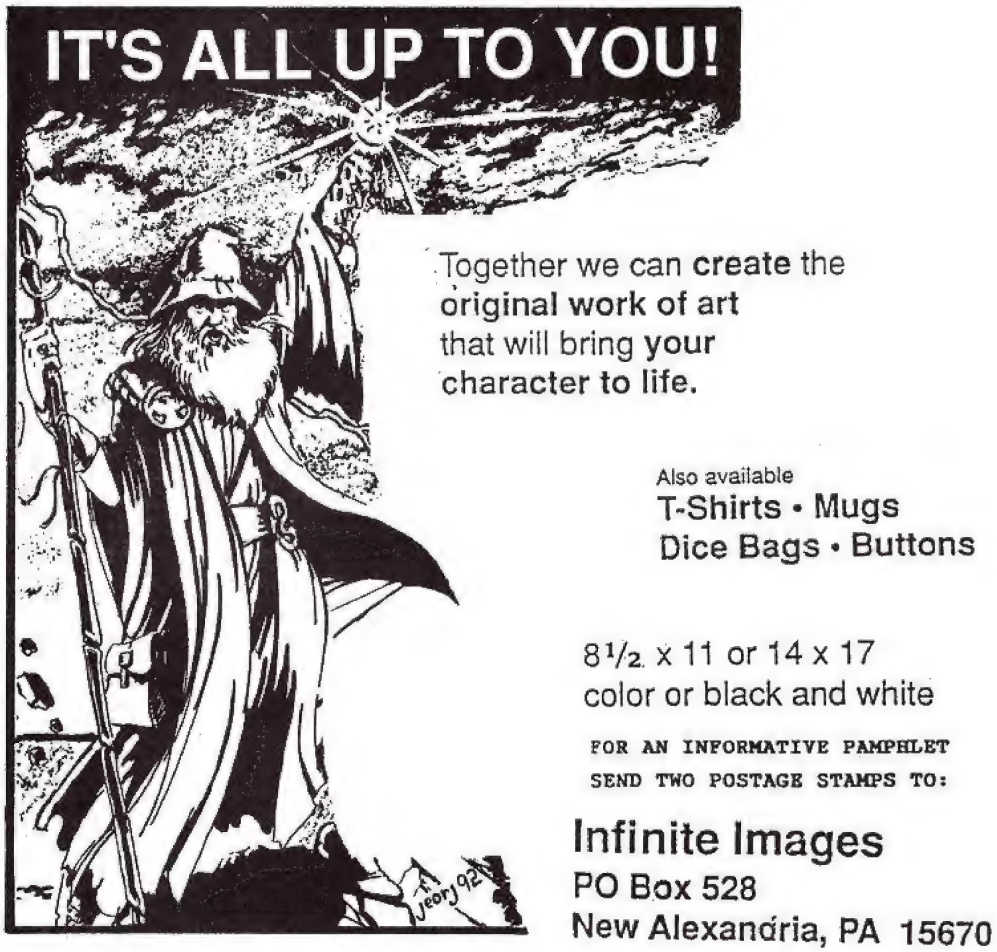
Super Chess
Company: Green Island Games

Chess for 2,3 or 4 players? Move over Mr. Spock - there's a new breed of chess in town. If you know how to play chess, you can easily learn **Super Chess** in a couple of minutes. The light colored pieces (Tan and White) play against the dark colored forces (Black and Brown). Partners sit across from one another. The first side to checkmate both kings wins the game. Super chess is a game of limitless possibilities with game start-up variations which can alleviate some of the standard moves of two man chess. Fun and challenging-this is a good game.

Summary:

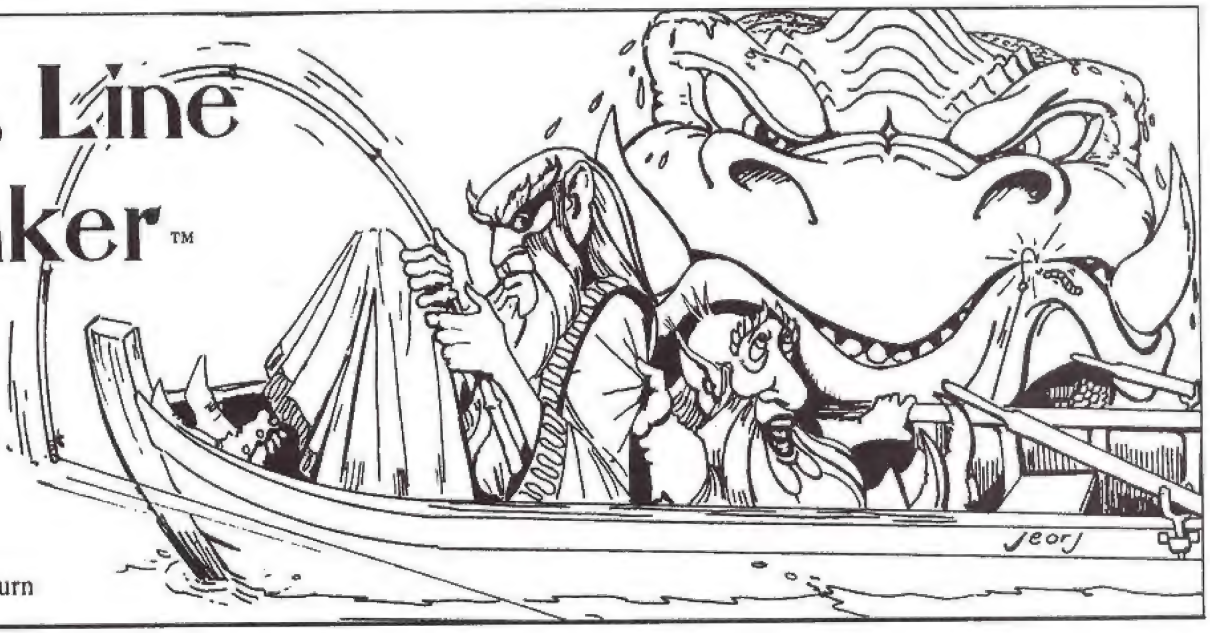
Well that's our overview of the goodies we stumbled across at GENCON. Remember - it's not a complete list and they are not reviews or endorsements - simply first impressions.

❑



Hook, Line & Sinker™

Adventures on the Fly!



Edited by Jolly R. Blackburn

What is a *Hook, Line and Sinker?*

Hook, Line and Sinker is one of the most popular columns to have appeared in SHADIS. For the benefit of our new readers, an HLS is a brief plotline for an adventure presented in a simple format. HLS scenarios are generic and are designed to give the Game Master the seeds for an adventure that he can build around. They come in handy when the GM has nothing else prepared or finds the party has outpaced him and the prepared adventure suddenly ends. Readers are encouraged to submit HLS scenarios for any genre.

Explanation:

Hook:
The current situation or location of the adventuring party.

Line:
An opportunity for adventure that presents itself to the party. A 'line' is normally presented as a short paragraph. Think of the line as the 'bait' to lure the party into an adventure.

Sinker:
The clincher to the 'line'. The sinker presents the GM with a dilemma that makes the situation a true 'adventure'.

The Party that Stays Together

Hook: The party is once again split up and as individuals are exploring every crack of your favorite fantasy city. All the players scream for attention, like two year olds, if you are not playing with them.

Line: Each player character, whatever he is doing, suddenly disappears in a mystical whorl of green dust. This does not include henchmen, but can include familiars. Each player should be taken into another room and told that he is now disembodied and can feel his spirit or soul slipping away. He somehow knows that only what is most important to his character will remain after his ordeal. The player should be given an exact time limit of no more than a few minutes to decide what is most important to him whether it is physical looks, strength, or even a certain weapon or item. Write down their choices.

Sinker: The players are paying back a debt for some past favor or misdeed. The owed favor or debt was purchased by a leprechaun named Danny O'Doone and is now being cashed in. A leprechaun commune in some far away land is being stamped and deforested by a small band of ogres. The leprechaun king, Danny decided to summon those adventurers he had in reserve to come and solve the problem. There seems to be only one problem. When the party arrives, they arrive joined as one creature. The spell cast by Danny went awry (possibly because the party was so far apart from each other!) and the summoned creatures all combined in transit.

Here is where the GM can take all the listed player choices and combine them. He may also add several of the more negative features of the players to the creature formed. The creature will demand everyone to flight together. The highest intelligence will call the shots, the strength my roll the attacks, a familiar in the mix may give night vision to it, but most assuredly, the creature will be ungraceful and awkward with serious physical disabilities and mental challenges. The humanoid thing may have two or more heads that allow two players to argue. It may have four arms, two which swing a massive sword and two that try desperately to cast magic. A small band of ogres will be tough work as the creature gets only one attack per round and has an overall poor and chancy list of abilities.

To conclude, the party will be sent back magically and the spell will be reversed. They will all end up in one inn room together. A really tough GM can add a little side effect to this failed spell. Whenever a member of the party is a way from the group, the party will start losing hit points. A real nice GM may give the party a bonus for being within a certain footage of each other and no penalty when separated.

Luke L. Ahearn

Love of a Lifetime

Hook: One of the party members goes solo into a city and meets the girl (or boy) of their dreams.
Line: It makes no difference if the new love interest charges for dream making or really likes the character. The GM should play this up as a straight forward encounter where the girl (or man) has nothing to hide. It is either real romance or business as usual if the love interest is a prostitute.

As the romantic/erotic evening ensues, the player is accidentally scratched by a ring on the NPC's finger. This should come across as an accident, but will no doubt arouse player suspicion no matter how you play it. The ring, if examined, seems to be a cheap ring with a chopped stone of no value. The glass bauble apparently scratched the player. The love interest acts as if they are really sorry and does not make too big a deal of the incident.
Sinker: The ring is highly magical and can infect all humanoid races with lycanthropy. Only the magic of a wish can remove the curse. After the PC, the ring has 3 uses left.

The love interest is amassing a small group of lycanthropes (wererats or werewolves) and currently has eight were creatures that come every full moon to loyally serve for six hours. An infected person remembers nothing during the change and can not control the change or their actions during the change. Of course this encounter takes place on the night of a full moon.

Luke L. Ahearn

The Klutz

Hook: The party meets a super-charismatic non-player character who seeks employment.
Line: The GM should dazzle the party with the NPC's abilities and exploits. The NPC will want to join the party on their next adventure and the GM should use all the tricks in the book to win the party's confidence.
Sinker: The NPC is a notorious klutz and a jinx. He will prove to be a formidable fighter and an asset to the party. However, given the opportunity the NPC will hamper the party from obtaining its goal.

If asked to tie off a rope - he will botch the job and it will come untied if anyone tries to climb down on it. In combat he will accidentally hit anyone within sword-swing. Put on guard duty and he will fall a sleep. If there's a trap in the area - he'll be the one to set it off.

Think of this guy as Gilligan in the Dungeon. He will always make a loud noise when stealth is of the essence and or otherwise impede the party. Of course this is all by accident and he will always appear greatly sorry and even angry at himself. He will belittle himself constantly about being a "jinx" and "worthless". He might play on the character's emotions by saying things like "My father was right - I'm no good. I wish his many beatings had proved fatal."

The GM should try to make the best of the situation - making the NPC totally likeable while at the same time causing him to harm the party. It should be interesting and reveiling to see how the party handles the situation.

Jolly R. Blackburn

The Innocent Man

Hook: A member of the party has just beat a tavern patron at a game of chance.
Line: The disgruntled opponent is actually a mage who curses the player before departing.
Sinker: The curse is little more than an amusing apprentice spell with a twist. Random items within arms reach of the player will inexplicably teleport to the player's pockets, back pack etc. The items can be of value or worthless. For example silverware from the dinner table, loose change, etc. In addition items from other people's pockets are fair game for the spell.

The player, of course, should initially be unaware of the curse. He will simply find that his pockets gradually get filled up with a wide variety of items as each day progresses.

B.A. Felton

Grod Mondre Hook, Line & Sinkers

The **Grod Mondre Arena,** which is included in this issue of SHADIS was designed to be set into any on-going campaign city, allowing the GM to incorporate arena fighting into his campaign.

To make the most of such a setting, the GM will have to run several sessions of play where characters become involved in the activities of running an arena stable.

The following are a few **Hook, Line and Sinkers** to help get you started.

A Slave's Life

Hook: The entire party has been captured as slaves or criminals and sold to the owner of a small struggling stable of arena fighters.
Line: While they are being trained the stable master dies and his widow takes over ownership. She has no interest in the stable and would like to sell but cannot find a buyer. She makes a tempting offer to the PC's. If they can raise enough money in fighting and managing the stable she will allow them to use the money to buy their freedom.
Sinker: The party is now essentially the masters of a stable. They have a small fund to work with and may hire a trainer and/or other fighters. They also have limited control over the stable as long as they can operate within their limited budget. (NOTE: When running this scenario make sure the business aspects of owning a stable come into play as detailed in the Grod Mondre article.)

The GM can spice things up a little by making it known the other established stables are bent on the Player's failure. They might even have had something to do with their stable owner's death.

John Zinser

The Great Dilemma

Hook: The GM can save this HLS until the party is arrested for some crime or otherwise captured by civic authorities.
Line: Using the Grod Mondre setting,

have the players hauled to a slave auction where they are bid upon by local stable masters as prospective gladiators. Magic Users and other 'non-fighter' types might be purchased for kitchen laborers or other menial tasks.

Sinker: The GM should have a lively session of bidding with the players ending up being purchased by the same stable master.

After some rigorous training the players are hauled to gladiator school's private arena. There the stable master announces that by law, he is only allowed 50 gladiators and that he has been a little over zealous and now has 54 fighters. The solution? An in house fight to weed out the lesser-able fighters. Of course this means several fights to the death.

This is where the fun comes in. The GM should match two players together and let the dice fall where they may. It should be interesting to see how former comrades-in-arms handle the situation.

Jolly Blackburn

The Scout

Hook: The party is at a tavern and it is fight night. The bar is crowded and the sand pit in the center of the bar is uncovered. The prize money and an opportunity to fight lures one of the PC's into the contest.

Line: If the party member wins the fight he is approached by a small man wearing rich robes. He says his name is Tornis Velm. Tornis is a scout for one of the stables of the Grod Mondre. He would like the fighter to come and join the stable as a free gladiator.

Sinker: The stable the man works for has fallen on hard times. He has taken to putting inexperienced gladiators in the arena and betting heavily against them. If the PC accepts he will be taken to the training camp and wined and dined but not trained. When it comes time to enter the arena he will be put up against fighters of higher quality than himself.

John Zinser

The Assassination

Hook: The Gray Lotus stable is going to try to kill Follian Grange of the Mottled Blue stable. A snitch has informed the owners of the Mottled Blue about the plan. The owners approach the party with a job offer.

Line: The party's job is to go undercover as fighters in the stable. It is known the assassin is to be one of the Mottled Blue's own fighters. The party is to find the traitor and kill him.

Sinker: Follian Grange is a proud man and the owners have chosen not to tell him about the plot. They also have ordered the players not to reveal their mission. As far as Follian knows, the players are promising fighters purchased by the owners.

The rumor is true that the Gray Lotus stable has paid off one of the fighters in the Mottled Blue stable to do the job. The party will have about a week to discover and expose the killer.

Follian is loyal to his fighters and will be hard-convinced that one of his own is a traitor. It is more likely that he will suspect the new-comers of treachery.

John Zinser

The Sand of Death

Hook: A mage approaches the party and tells them he will pay a very large sum if they complete a 'simple' task for him.

Line: The mage is in need of a small quantity of sand from the Grod Mondre arena floor. The sand must contain the blood of a freshly slain gladiator or warrior killed in combat.

Sinker: It is illegal to take the sand from the arena because it has been found to be a very powerful spell component and figures greatly into the local religion. The soil is considered sacred because of all the warriors who have died on it.

The party must find a way to get the sand directly after a match. They could have a member of the party go in as a fighter or they could find some other way to get it. If the party is caught they will not be put in jail or sentenced to death. Rather, they will be placed in the arena during the next game where they will have to fight for their lives.

John Zinser

KNIGHT GALLERY

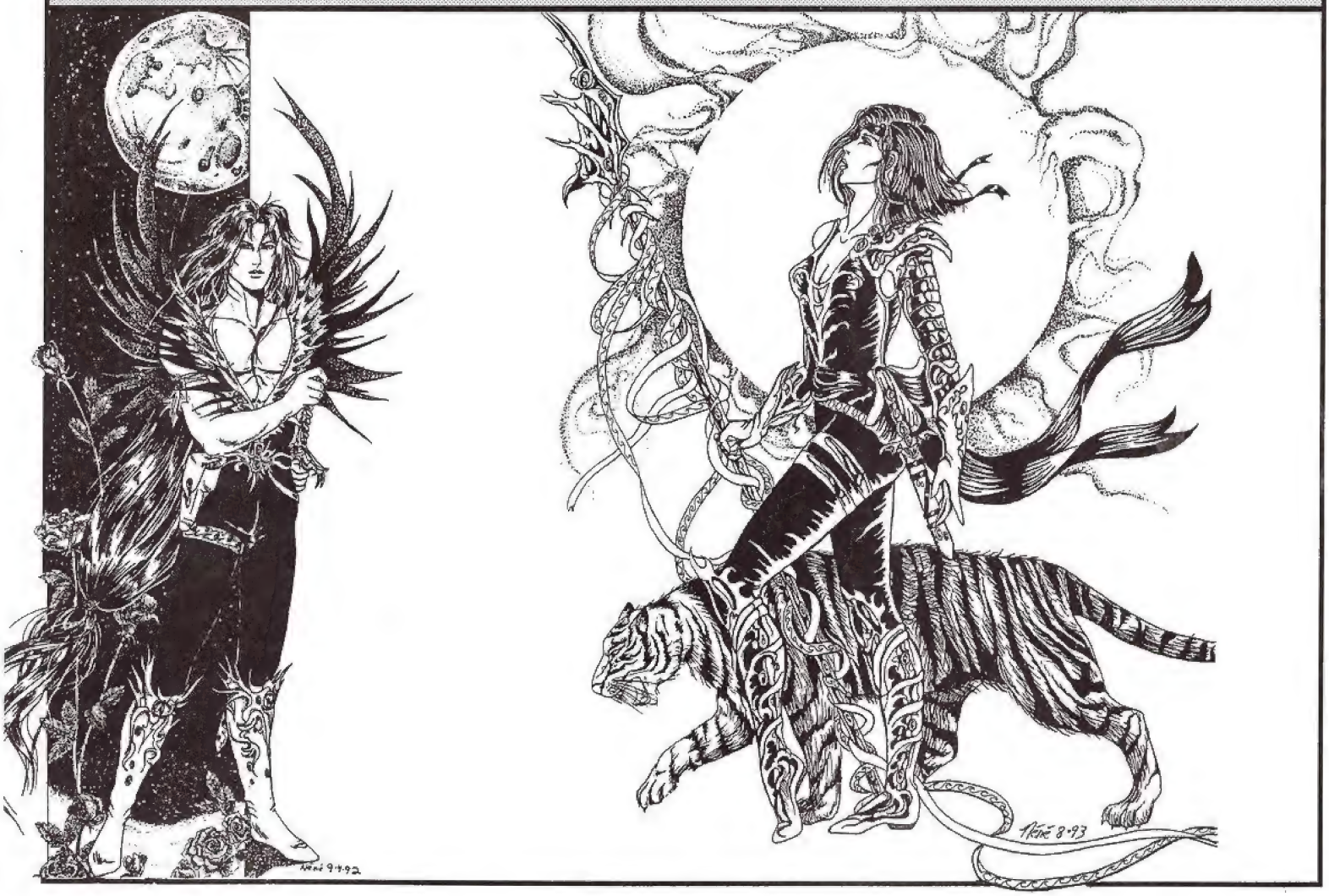
An Artist Showcase

Featured Artist:

NéNé (Tina Thomas)

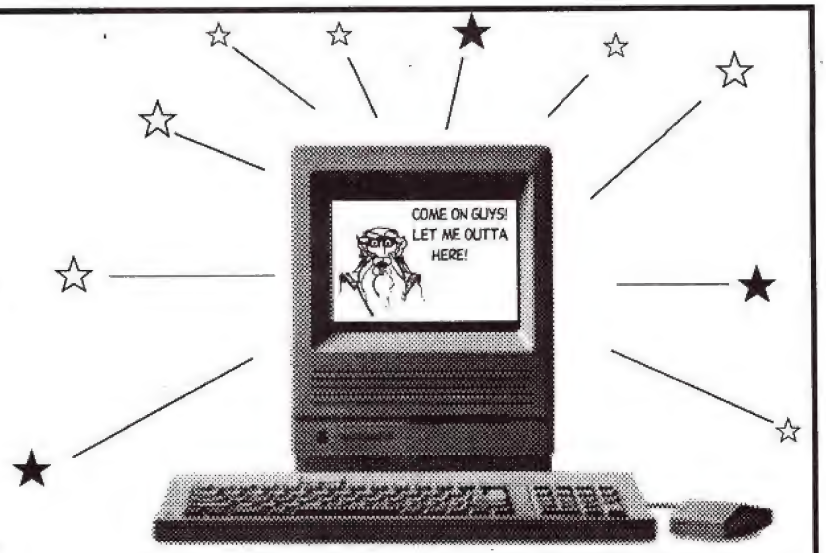
NéNé began her art career at A-Kon 3 in 1992. She won Best Amateur at that convention and has since won it several more times. She has placed semi-finalist in the Illustrators of the Future Contest, two time running, was invited as a Guest Artist at Conniption, self published her '93 calendar which sold out two print runs. She is currently doing work for Storm Press, Wizards of the Coast, Cryptych Magazine, Shadis Magazine, Cyberwerks, Last Unicorn, Paper Mayhem, Steve Jackson Games and Nocturnal Enigma. Prints of NéNé's works are available through Chimera Publications.

NéNé like all artists, is interested in a variety of hobbies and subjects. She voraciously reads Fantasy, Science Fiction, History, Fashion and Regency Romances (we all have our indulgences). In her off time she torments her roommate's dog and four cats and occasionally does the dishes.



Disks of Wondrous Power

Computer Game Reviews



Edited by B.A. Felton

Integrating the Computer into Group Role-Playing

What is needed to truly integrate the computer into Group Role-Playing? This is an idea that has been discussed for years at conventions among notable writers and game designers, and written about in many articles and letters to the industry's magazines. What is the answer? Well, the computer role playing games on the market today do the opposite, they integrate Role Playing into the computer. And Virtual Reality? That will indeed be the ultimate role playing experience, but what's on the market now that can accomplish this role playing "nirvana"?

Goldtree Enterprises has released a new product for the Game Master, named KINGSPOINT™, that is actually two products in one: a full featured computer application for the game master, and a fully developed fantasy city. KINGSPOINT™ comes with the software, a users guide, technical support, over 30 architectural quality maps, and 5 scale conversion maps, all contained in a functional 3-ring binder system.

The party's adventure and interactions with others are all represented to the Game Master by a dynamic computer display. Character and building graphics can be attached to the representative data screen, and over 30 maps are graphically displayed to assist in navigating the party, but the products main emphasis are a) data and information management (KINGSPOINT™ the software) and, b) stimulating creativity (Kingspoint the city).

The software performs the function of realistically modeling the City of Kingspoint and its inhabitants, while placing the Game Master at the center of control. This is a new approach to Role Playing in that it doesn't attempt to replace the Game Master with the computer, but offers to him and his players a full fantasy environment that prompts and stimulates the imagination while eliminating the overwhelming chores of record keeping and fact retrieval.

The appearance of characters and city inhabitants, random occurrences, and consequently the continuous development of the city, is influenced by such real-life factors as the time of day, weather conditions, area of the city, type of establishment, a characters type and appearance, his past history, etc. The city has also been designed using street addresses, districts, and a master plan that incorporates zoning considerations that are recognized by the software. Likewise, the population of Kingspoint and her characters follow real life population trends that continue to evolve as the players interact with their environment (or as the Game Master alters the environment).

The power behind Role Playing is that it uses the player's imagination to bring fantasy onto a level playing field with real life, and the more organized and true-to-life the Game Master is, the more exhilarating the experience. KINGSPOINT™ has accomplished this with real-life simulations and information management, allowing the Game Master to conduct a faster paced, more exciting game.

The Fantasy City

The developed City of Kingspoint contains so much information that if it were printed in its entirety, it would fill a modern phone book. The city contains about 500 detailed buildings with such fields of information as a quality rating, population control for each location, and a place to list Managers and Employees as well as an unlimited Memo Field for each Location. There are also thousands of empty locations, all accessible to the Game Master, and each with the same functions and fields as a detailed building.

In addition to the 150,000 random inhabitants, there are also 500 detailed characters that populate the City of Kingspoint, each with an array of control features. For example, every character has his Information Sheet, or Cover

Sheet. This first sheet allows the Game Master to control the outward appearances of a character. This Cover Sheet allows the GM to disguise a character or print out a sheet to cover the printed stat sheet. The Stat sheet is customizable and allows the GM to insert a customized template for his game system. There is also an unlimited Memo for character history, also with a customized template.

Characters each have an inventory system that lists the name of the item, owner, location, and an unlimited Memo Field to describe the item. This is tied together in the Main Screen with all inventory in the city. There is also a full menu of print options, and the graphic file display capability for each character.

The developed city also includes the City History of Kingspoint, Histories of the six major districts of the city, Event Calendars, the RPG libraries and City Information directory, all fully customizable by the Game Master. There are also included two complete adventure scenarios to be played in Kingspoint.

The printed city supplies such information as a fully developed legal system, sewer descriptions, an illegal guild system that allows the rapid assembly of any type of illegal guild, and the guard operations for the whole city.

Putting the computer to work on finding and accessing such information on the spur of the moment is quick and efficient, making it feasible to host a "Free Form" role playing session through a major city.

The Software Program

The advanced techniques used in this software program has enabled such an ambitious project as KINGSPOINT™ to be possible. Imagine your players entering a fantasy city of the same size as KINGSPOINT™ without a computer and asking for the nearest inn.

"Okay!" you say as you thump down a three inch thick book, "Let me just look up your location, cross reference that in the index, G..H..I.. Okay here it is. There is an Inn just around the corner named the Paper Cut Inn."

"Sounds boring," the players moan, "What's in that building?"

"Let's see," you flip around to find building number 342. "Okay, that's a cobbler."

"Booooring"

"Now where were we? Okay an inn. . .", you continue.

"Who's on the street?" one of the players still paying attention to the game interrupts.

"I don't know," you hesitate, distracted, "people I guess".

And so it goes through out the night.

In Kingspoint, you would simply ask the computer and know in seconds the answer to, "Where's the nearest inn?" Likewise, all buildings in the immediate area can be listed, or only those in sight of the party.

The answer to who is on the street is constantly present. Every location has a dynamically rotating list of notable street types and each can be interacted with and randomly generated. You would simply highlight a person on the street and the computer would generate a character complete with dress, weapons, and initial reactions.

Character/Information Management Essential

A major focus from the beginning of the development of KINGSPOINT™ has always been character management. The task of trying to record and track a living creature is enormous. To have a character travel through a city, just for one day, is to generate many encounters and exchanges that are forever lost in traditional role playing. The time wasted in rewriting character sheets, searching through hand written notes, and disputing simple facts stems from inadequate character/information management.

When your gaming session reconvenes, no matter how much time has elapsed, the KINGSPOINT(TM) program starts from where you have left off. When you turn on the computer, weather, life on the streets, and current player position is all reinstated. You can very quickly reviewed the players recorded movements and be reminded of any other pertinent information from the last session.

"We go to the Dancing Imp Inn," a player states, "we are thirsty!"

The Game Master asks very concerned, after having reviewed the GM Journal, "Are you sure you do that?"

The player knows of such GM tricks, asking a question in a very concerned tone, and chooses to ignore it.

"Yes, and we announce ourselves very loudly when we enter".

"OK, the innkeeper comes and looks closely at you, it seems that he looks angry as he runs to the door. You hear the cry 'Guards, Guards' from the street. What do you do?"

The players protest, some panic, others ready their weapons. A cooler head prevails among the players, "Why is he calling the guards on us.

"Gee, I thought you would never ask. It seems that three months ago you set his inn on fire and ran off his business."

"That was three months in game time, but we haven't played in over six months. We forgot."

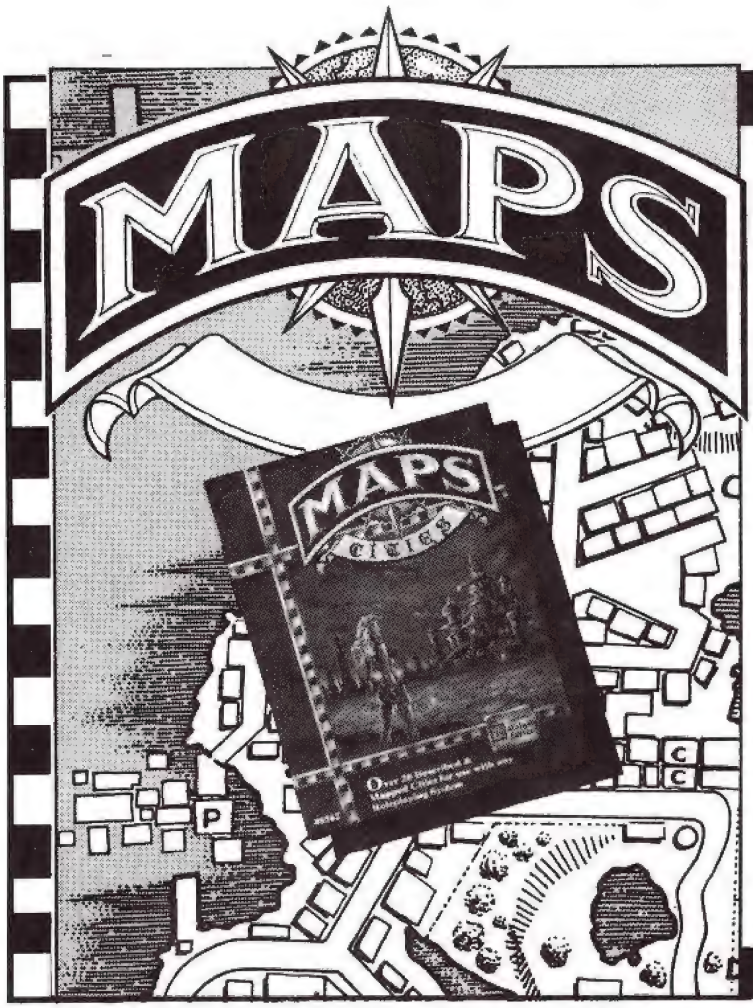
"OK, so next time you will read the encounter reports I handed out at the beginning of the evening, but this time the innkeeper just asks you to leave after paying for the damages."

"We pay, and never come here again."

"Good, because as you leave a dark and menacing sorcerer appears before you and says..." and the party is led into an adventure through the city of Kingspoint where they learn to hide at night and shun the daylight as the inhabitants of the city, and the guardsmen, may recognize them.

With KINGSPOINT™, a character is handled with a very high degree of organization and flexibility that assumes a character is going to be around a long time. It is an obvious fact that a few sheets of paper, or unattached Memo Fields, won't do the trick of handling quick and efficient character tracking and long term adventure recording. In KINGSPOINT™ each character has several areas to store, sort, and search for information. The Player's sheet provides a Graphic File Display function that, although will display your own graphic files, is designed to display the soon to be released graphic libraries of Character Types from Goldtree.

One of the most powerful features of the program is the Game Master's Journal Entry System. As mentioned above, you may keep track of character movement through the city. This GM Journal is not just a bunch of empty Memo fields, but a real system designed to handle an unlimited number of entries on as many characters as needed. The Game Mas-



21 fully-described cities

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ter is able to quickly record all statistical information about a situation, such as the time, date, place, area, etc... with a keystroke, not interrupting the flow of play. The GM need only define an identifying header of the event and then, if need be, fill in an attached Memo field that is unlimited in size to describe the event further. This attached Memo field will have a template, either a default sample or one as defined by the Game Master, and full access to the "Hot Keys" that reduce the typing of most standard and customized information to a single keystroke. Finally, the computer keeps track of the characters involved and their outlook towards the party. If ever anyone previously encountered is encountered in the future, the Game Master is instantly reminded.

In addition to the automatic reminder of previous encounters, this program also allows the Game Master to manipulate the rate and severity of Random Occurrences. The computer will read the screen of the computer every so often and determine where the players are, what the time is, who is present, and consider other factors of the current adventuring situation as it assembles an appropriate occurrence to suggest to the Game Master.

Among the other features of the program are an on-line dice roller, self generating weather system, customizable templates for character sheets and other memo fields, editing hot keys, time control features, and more.

KINGSPOINT™ is a radical departure from what is currently out on the market for role players so we must explain:.

This computer software program is NOT a graphic game, but is a super utility that allows the display of graphic files of building facades and floor plans, maps, and characters.

This program is NOT a simple utility that only rolls dice, but is a super utility that is designed to function as a command and control center for the Game Master during play.

This program is NOT another Role playing system, but a fantasy environment that can be customized to any setting or rules system.

Although this product can be edited, customized, and filled in, it is by no means empty for it is also a fully developed fantasy city that holds over 500 detailed characters, 500 detailed locations, 1,000's of computer generated encounters, and more.

GOLDTREE is a firm that specializes in database design and product development. The firm is based in Metairie, Louisiana. During the last few years, GOLDTREE has shifted it's emphasis to gaming where there is a great need for flexible and useful software applications for the development, creation, and organizing of entire worlds and enormous dungeons. Future role playing products includes upgrades, published modules, graphic libraries for the Kingspoint program, fiction publishing, and more.

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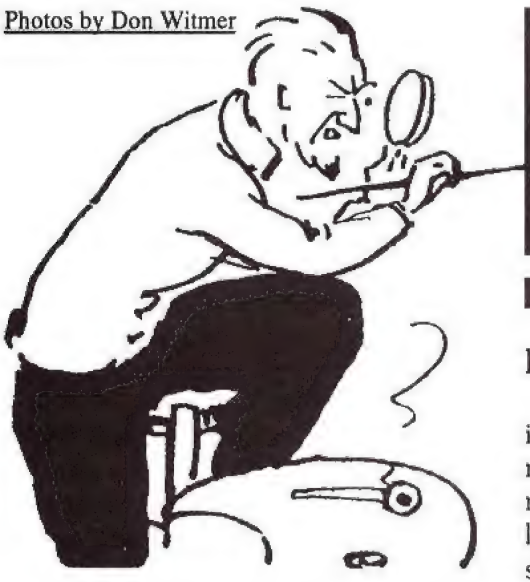
❑

Photos by Don Witmer



NEW PERSPECTIVES

By Ken Carpenter

Jolly may already have mentioned this new area of Shadis but I'd like to take some editorial license to introduce what I believe New Perspectives offers you readers. While Shadis has always supported Role-playing games (in all their many forms) and provided a neutral ground for the exploration of new ideas, miniature gaming has grown tremendously in the last few years. Let's give a voice to that part of the hobby as well.

In almost every role-player there is a little miniature hobbyist waiting for just the right moment... New Perspectives will provide tips for miniature collectors, painters and gamers. This issue, due to editorial deadlines, we really only had time and space for a number of reviews. In upcoming issues we will present terrain building tips, designing scenarios for various games, playing strategies for popular games and, hopefully, some beginning sculpting tips from the pros.

The greatest emphasis of Shadis has always been to enjoy our hobby and I'll do my best to reflect that is what we present here. I'm sure you'll keep me honest.

Jolly already told me that we don't have gobs of space for me this issue so I'd better stop rambling before he decides to cut...

Lead-Ban Impacts Industry

There have been a good deal of changes in the miniature industry in the past year, not the least of which was a general move from lead-based white metal to no-lead pewter. Though this was a painful shift for the industry, there was little alternative.

State and federal agencies have targeted lead as 'the enemy' so the choices for miniature manufacturers was to change materials or spend every penny they could, collectively, gather in order to fight the lead bans state to state. Obviously, the government can afford to drag the battle out, thus driving the legal fees to the industry out of reality.

A year ago, Ral Partha, Games Workshop, Grenadier and many other miniature manufacturers, fought the New York State ban on lead products. It cost them $50,000 to do it. It was then that they realized exactly how expensive, and pointless, it would be to fight it in all 50 states.

Similar to the fundamentalist Christian stand against roleplaying games, the groups opposed to lead-based collectibles were largely driven by emotion, fear and ignorance, not any serious scientific study into the dangers of buying or owning fine, lead-based collectibles.

The reason I brought this up is because manufacturers have been the butt of too many attacks of late. They are not the bad guys here - they are just the victims of an inevitable movement toward a totally non-toxic society. The reason prices have gone up is because the new alloys have a higher percentage of fallout (meaning that a larger number of figures aren't good enough to sell when they come out of the spin caster, vs the white metal fallout percentage).

The change has been painful for everyone, the manufacturers because the higher prices slow sales, and the gamers because we can't buy as many figures as we'd like.

Miniature Game Reviews

Company: Heartbreaker Games
Game: Blood Berets
Number: 9001
Cost: $34.95

Recently, Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games released licensed products from the Mutant Chronicles line. The Mutant Chronicles, developed and owned by Target Games AB in Europe (I believe Sweden or Scandinavia), is becoming quite the rage abroad and is quickly becoming popular in the US.

The first of these releases are Blood Berets, a miniatures style boardgame, and Mutant Chronicles, the Techno-Fantasy Roleplaying game. Let's take a look at Blood Berets;

Blood Berets comes with sixteen figures - six imperial troopers and ten legionnaires (including leaders). There are also nine double-sided terrain tiles that can go together in a number of different ways, character cards for the forces, equipment cards and Dark Symmetry cards for the Nepharite's (the leaders of the evil forces) powers. The game also comes with a twenty-sided die, the only die needed for play.

When I first looked at the game, I thought it was another Space Hulk look-alike. The premise was similar and even some of the terminology was the same. However, the more familiar I got with the game, the more I realized that my first assessment was wrong. There are a few similarities, like you have two forces moving around in an environment shooting at each other and the bad guys get to

move around counters that represent their forces (without giving away specific numbers) until they are in the same area as the enemy. That's pretty much where the similarity ends.

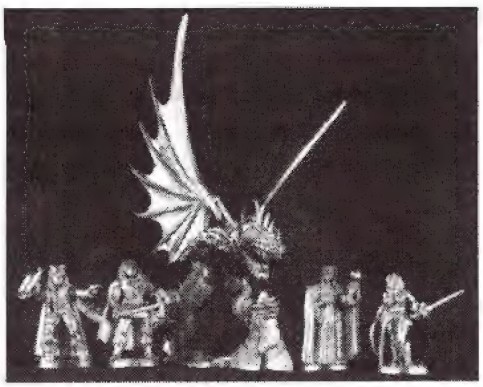
Blood Berets has a lot of depth, such as the ability to change equipment between scenarios, add specialty weapons, scanning rules, planting mines, hiding cave entrances, etc. I also like the initiative system for turns - each player places one counter per figure into a cup, then the counters are removed one at a time. The player whose counter was removed is able to select one model and perform their actions for that turn.

The character cards are two sided, one side for the figure in full health, the other for the figure when it's wounded. The skills for each state are different, so being wounded actually has a great impact on the character's ability to perform. The combat process for firing and wounding is quite interesting too. Once hit, a model gets an armor roll based on the strength of his armor vs. the power of the weapon.

The rulebook is 30 half-sized pages long, though there are lots of illustrations, and it reads easily. There are a few places where the rules are a bit vague, but there many examples to help clear those spots up.

Though the box doesn't say anything about it, the game is really for two players, though more could play if they wanted to divide the playing forces, and I wouldn't recommend it for players under the age of twelve.

The game is a lot of fun and contains some interesting background information on the Mutant Chronicles universe, though not nearly as much as the roleplaying game.



Dragon Strike Miniatures

Company: Ral Partha Enterprises, Inc.
Catalog: $3.00
Name: Dragon Strike Miniatures
Series: TSR Boxed Sets
Number: 10-513
Scale: 25mm
Sculptor: Jim Johnson, Dave Summers and Geoffrey Valley
Cost: $24.95

This boxed set is designed for use with TSR's popular board game DragonStrike. It includes seven characters and one dragon. Four of the characters, two human spell casters, a male elf bowman and a dwarf warrior, where sculpted by Geoffrey Valley. The other three characters, human female and male warriors and a human shaman, where created by Jim Johnson. Dave Summers sculpted the dragon figure.

Let's look at Valley's pieces first. His style is distinguishable from most of Ral Partha's crew because he tends toward sharper features and craggy faces. I'm particularly taken with the cleric with his floor length robes, holding up the crystal ball in his right hand. The face is great! Not real attractive (it's not supposed to be), this is the face of a wizened old clergyman. The dwarf is also highly detailed, with good looking studded leather armor and tasseled vest.

Jim Johnson, who has been with RP for just over a year now, is a talented sculptor with a style of his own. He has produced some great pieces for this set. His sculptures have smoother, more attractive faces and fuller figures. His human male fighter is nicely detailed with what looks to be scalemail, though the left shoulder is free, gladiatorial style (though it was usually the sword arm that was bare). He also sports a long cloak and excellently detailed belt and bandolier.

The shaman is probably the finest character in the set. With a fox fur head covering, detailed vest, numerous totems and bric-a-bract plus the great looking scroll - this is a great miniature.

For those of you who were unable to beg, borrow or steal one of Ral Partha's limited edition The Great Red Dragon, Dave Summers, a veteran sculptor with a great deal of talent, has recreated a smaller version for this boxed set. One of the industries great releases of the last few years, The Great Red Dragon sold out in record time. This reduced size version does the original justice, though the size isn't quite as impressive.

The dragon will need some careful assembly but is well within even a novice's ability to construct. It comes in nine pieces, considerably less than the original's 20+ pieces, and the casting is impeccable. There is a slight mold line from the dragon's right arm to the left leg but it cleans up easily with a hobby knife and needle file. The neck pieces also need a little filing because of the difficulty in casting such needle-like spikes.

Whether or not you have the DragonStrike game, don't miss the opportunity to pick up this set.

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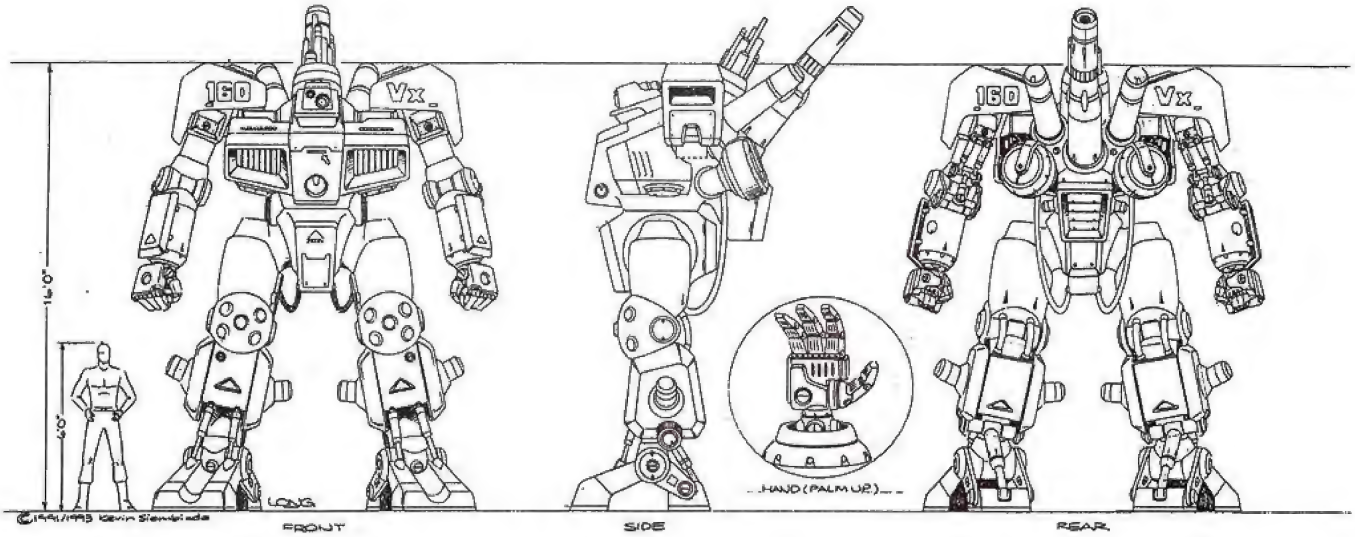

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Unfortunately, we don't have any photographs available yet to show you what we have planned. The best we can do is show some of the front, side and back views created as reference guides for our sculptors.

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- **Dragon Boxed Sets:** Specific dragons, price and date of release not yet determined (probably not before 1994).

Highlights Include:

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Available at hobby shops and comic stores everywhere!

Name: Albatross
Series: Battletech
Number: 20-794
Scale: 1/285
Sculptor: Dave Summers
Cost: $7.25

The Albatross miniature, out of FASA's 3055 Technical Readout for Battletech, is one nice piece of work from RP. It comes in 6 pieces, cast in lead-free Ralidium.

From a players standpoint, the mech has an incredible array of long and short range weaponry. However, the pilot will have to watch the heat in a prolonged fight.

The arms mount an LB 10-X and a Large Pulse Laser, plus dual medium lasers (a separate piece that mounts to the right arm). The ER Large Laser mounts to the left torso (near the shoulder) and both missile launchers, LRM-15 and SRM-6, are visible in the right shoulder.

The figure has a high degree of detail, especially on the arms and torso. The quality of the casting is excellent, having negligible mold lines. The pieces fit together perfectly so you won't break a sweat trying to get the model assembled.

The position of the feet give the figure good movement and the fact that the model comes in many pieces allows a great deal of freedom during assembly. The potential for modification is good. Some hobby stores carry miniature ball joints that can be placed at the torso joint, or where the arms meet the torso, to allow the figure to move. Be careful as you install the joints that you make the joint tight, so there is some resistance - that way the gravity won't reposition the figure for you.

Name: Black Spiral Dancer (Crinos, Hispo and Lupus form)
Series: Werewolf - The Apocalypse
Number: 69-010
Scale: 25mm
Sculptor: Jim Johnson
Cost: $7.00

This three piece set contains some strange critters for the Werewolf game system. The largest figure is the Crinos form (biped), one foot resting upon a small, wooden crate. With a bat-like head and folds of skin under his raised arms, this is a highly detailed figure, complete with segmented tail, dagger and severed wolf head.

The casting is clean - no visible mold lines or areas requiring anything more than touch-up filing. While designed for Werewolf, this figure could appear in any role-playing game as a GM designed mystery monster (keeps the players on their toes).

The Hispo form (on four legs with humanoid face) is nicely detailed as well. The forelegs of the creature end in very humanoid hands, one of which holds an automatic pistol, the tail is segmented and the beast has boney spikes rising out of its back. I especially like the face on the creature - the blend of human and animal is just right.

There is a slight mold line on the right side of the face, but it's light and easily removed with a fine needle file. The quality of workmanship is excellent.

The Lupus form (full wolf, or in this case mostly wolf) appears as a wolf but has a ribbed fin rising out of its back. The wolf is well done, from fur to proportions. Again, the forelegs end in very human looking hands.

There are light mold lines on the inside of the front legs, but they won't be tough to remove.

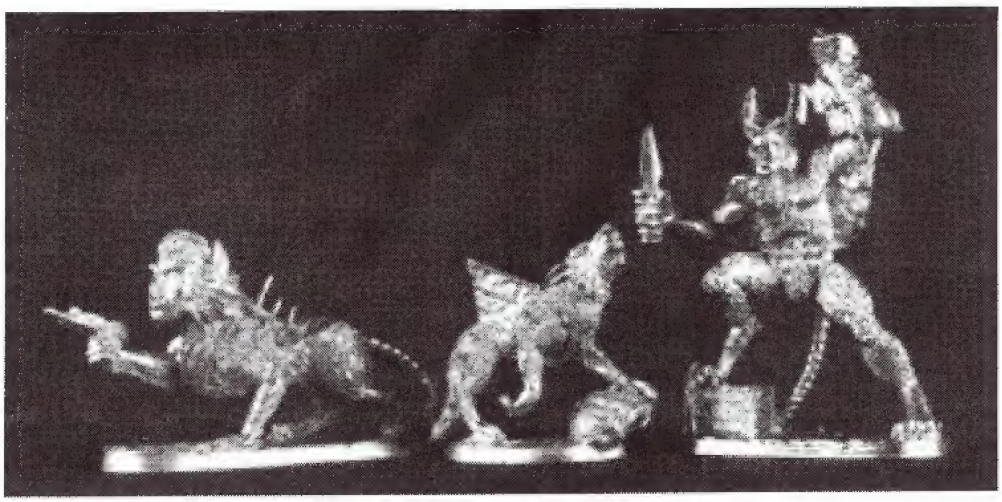
Overall, this is a very clean and well detailed set. As I said before, in addition to Werewolf, these pieces would fit into most role-playing games.

Company: Heartbreaker Hobbies & Games
Name: Elf
Series: Fantasy
Number: 5016
Scale: 28mm
Sculptor: Chas Elliot
Cost: $1.75

Few companies can claim to have better miniature products than Heartbreaker. With a sculptor like Chas Elliot, Heartbreaker can make miniatures with the best of them.

This figure has the sharp, stylized, elven features that Chas is fond of, though only half the face is visible. The armor has very sharp angles and sharp lines. The multi-layered skirt and armor is a nice touch.

The helm is, obviously, a great piece of work, with the dragon sporting separate



Black Spiral Dancer

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wings and arched back. I also like the heavy wood grain on the inside of the shield. The shield is the only thing that bothers me. Because it's so long, it has a problem retaining its shape, so it curls a little toward the bottom. I would recommend, to advanced modelers only, that you cut the bottom of the shield off and sculpt in the bottom of the robes. The shape of the shield is nice, so I would just angle the lower edges together into a point ending at about the figure's knee.

There is a minute mold line down the front leg of the figure but it should clean up without a trace. Other than that, the casting is perfect.

This miniature is well worth adding to your collection of gaming aides, for that tough elven warrior.

Name: Troll Skyraider
Series: Earthdawn
Number: 306
Scale: 25mm
Sculptor: Chad Elliot
Cost: $4.95

Another indication that Heartbreaker is an up and coming miniature maker is that FASA has licensed the miniature rights for Earthdawn to Heartbreaker. FASA is in the habit of accepting only the best, and they have placed a great deal of trust in HHG.

This troll character, complete with huge club and heavy knife, is another good figure. The skins across his shoulders, his belt and shirt are all highly detailed, as are his hairy face and beard. His arms are thick and powerful, as you might expect from a troll.

His helmet is almost comical because it seems too small for his head. He must have stomped on a dwarf and then kept his helm. I think that the helm adds, rather than detracts, to the models appeal - it adds a little more personality.

There are thin mold lines along the right side of the troll and along the front of his left leg. They are not heavy and should clean up easily. The knife seems a bit thick and you might want to file it down a bit (but trolls aren't exactly known for their skills as a weaponsmith).

The plastic base seemed a bit small, when I first put the model on it, but it stands up just fine and can even be pushed around a bit without falling, so I guess it's fine.

This is a must have, as far as I'm concerned. Even if you don't play FASA's Earthdawn (which could be a mistake, from all I've seen and heard of it) this figure will fit well into any fantasy milieu.

Heartbreaker's Troll Skyraider

Company: Rafm Company, Inc.
Catalog: $3.00
Name: Behemoth Armor
Series: Legions of Steel
Number: 1520
Scale: 25mm
Sculptor: Unknown at time of publication

Another company that doesn't get enough attention, RAFM has been producing excellent figures for many years. Designed for Legions of Steel, from Global Games, this lead free figure is formidable.

This piece comes in three pieces that fit together nicely, though they don't allow a lot of freedom when positioning the arms, unless you're willing to do some filing. There are mold lines on the right shoulder and between the legs but they are faint and clean up easily.

The figure is positioned in such a way that the assembled figure has a strong illusion of motion. The detail on the backpack, legs and belt are very impressive. Seeing this figure really makes me want to see the rest of the line.

While this figure won't easily fit into games other than Legions of Steel, I am a lover of good figures and have, more than once, become involved with games because I loved the miniatures first. Where do I get a copy of Legions of Steel?

Name: C1 Succubot
Series: Legions of Steel
Number: 1720
Scale: 25mm
Sculptor: Tom Mier
Cost: ????

More for Legions of Steel, from the talents of RAFM, comes the C1 Succubot. The amount of detail on this figure is incredible. From legs to back to arms and head, this figure is so highly detailed that I can't begin to calculate the number of hours that the talented sculptor put into the original piece.

With four arms, the lower two being robotic, clawed, robotic legs and a perfect, feminine face, this figure could easily lure men to their doom, much like the traditional succubus.

There is a light mold line down the right side of the face and numerous threads of metal from pin sized air holes in the mold, but it all cleans up nicely, leaving you with a fantastic figure.

I really can't say enough about this figure - it is the most detailed figure I've seen in a while, and it will be quite a painting challenge. Get it and face that challenge - remember, that which does not destroy us makes us better painters.

Name: Men of Magic #1
Series: Rifts
Number: 8005
Scale: 25mm
Sculptor: Jim Johnson

The first thing I noticed about the figures was the style - I recognized it, but the blister didn't say who the sculptor was. I turned the figure over and saw that they were copyrighted by Kevin Siembieda from Palladium, but didn't think he was the sculptor (I'm sure he's too busy to have taken up sculpting). Finally, and I could beat myself for not having noticed right away, I saw the stylized JAJ on the rear side of the stand. That would be Jim Johnson, one of Ral Partha's in house sculptors.

There are four figures in the blister, each a man of magic in the RIFTS game system. The figure with a mace-like scepter in his left hand is an eye-catcher. With his face wrapped like a mummies, heavily jeweled belt and detailed tunic he makes in interesting personality.

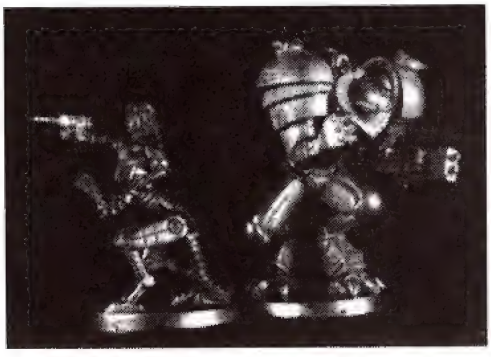
Another one, with his right arm extended in front of him, wears a gas mask like face covering, a long cloak and detailed belt with hangings in front. Unfortunately, the model I received had a slight shift in the mold during casting so his right arm will need some work to make the mold line go away.

Another figure carries what looks almost like a small movie camera in his left hand while his right hand goes for his pistol. He has a WWI flying cap complete with goggles and flying jacket with fur collar. He wears a boot knife and knee protectors as well. This model, in addition to having nice detail and a realistic face, is very good technically. There is little or no visible mold line, so it should clean up easily and without a trace.

The last figure looks like a fantasy magic user. He carries a serpent or dragon headed staff, wears long robes and has a hood pulled up over his head. The face is very good, with a nicely trimmed beard and mustache.

This figure also suffers from a heavier than normal mold line on the right arm, but it should clear away alright. Other than that, the mold lines are light and the figure shouldn't have a trace of lines after a careful filing.

These figures are very interesting and a couple of them are good for other games as well, so the set has appeal to players of many game systems. Despite the minor technical flaws on two of them, requiring a little more than average time for clean-up, I do recommend these figures to most gamers and all collectors. It's good to see Palladium so well represented. ❑



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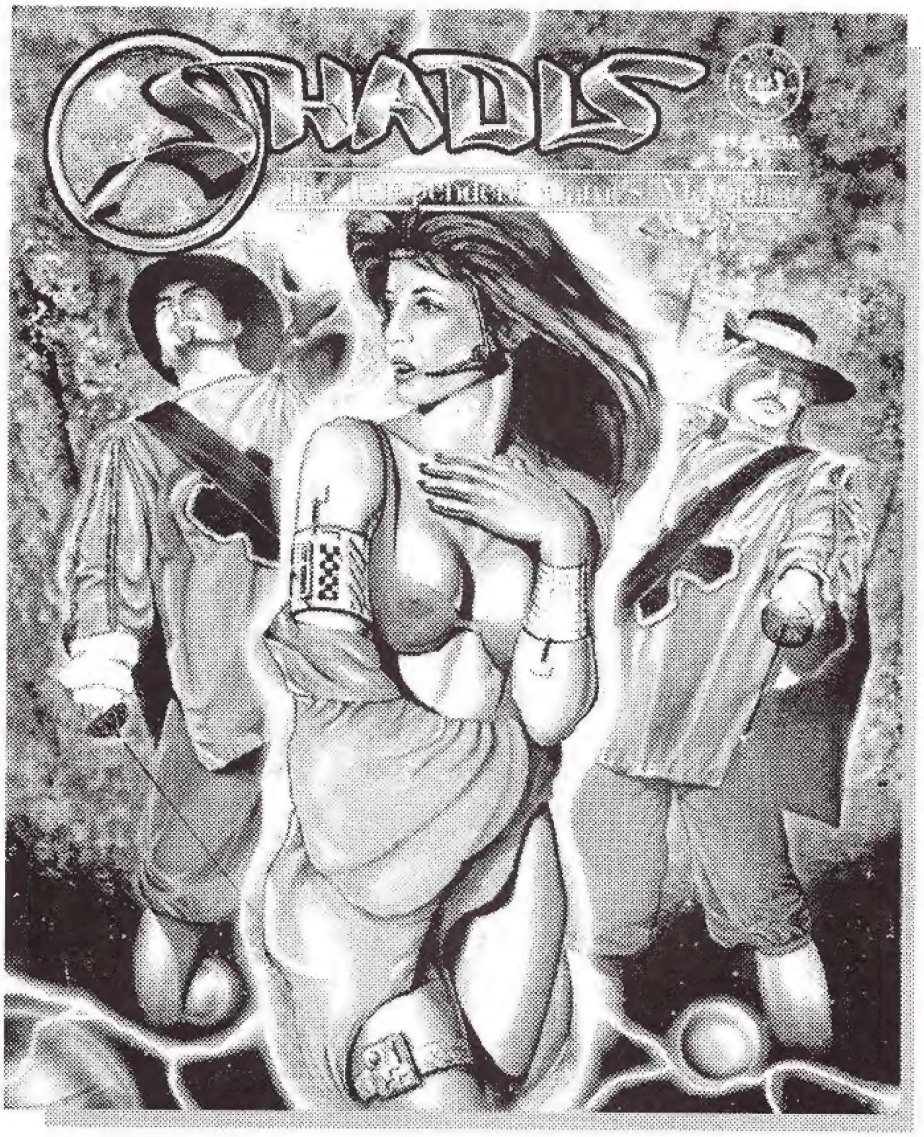

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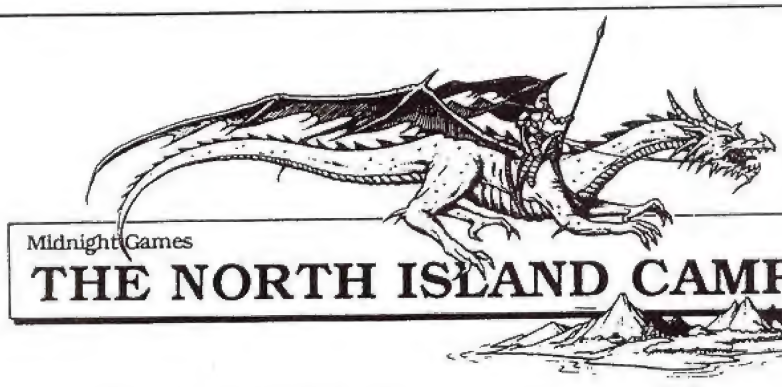

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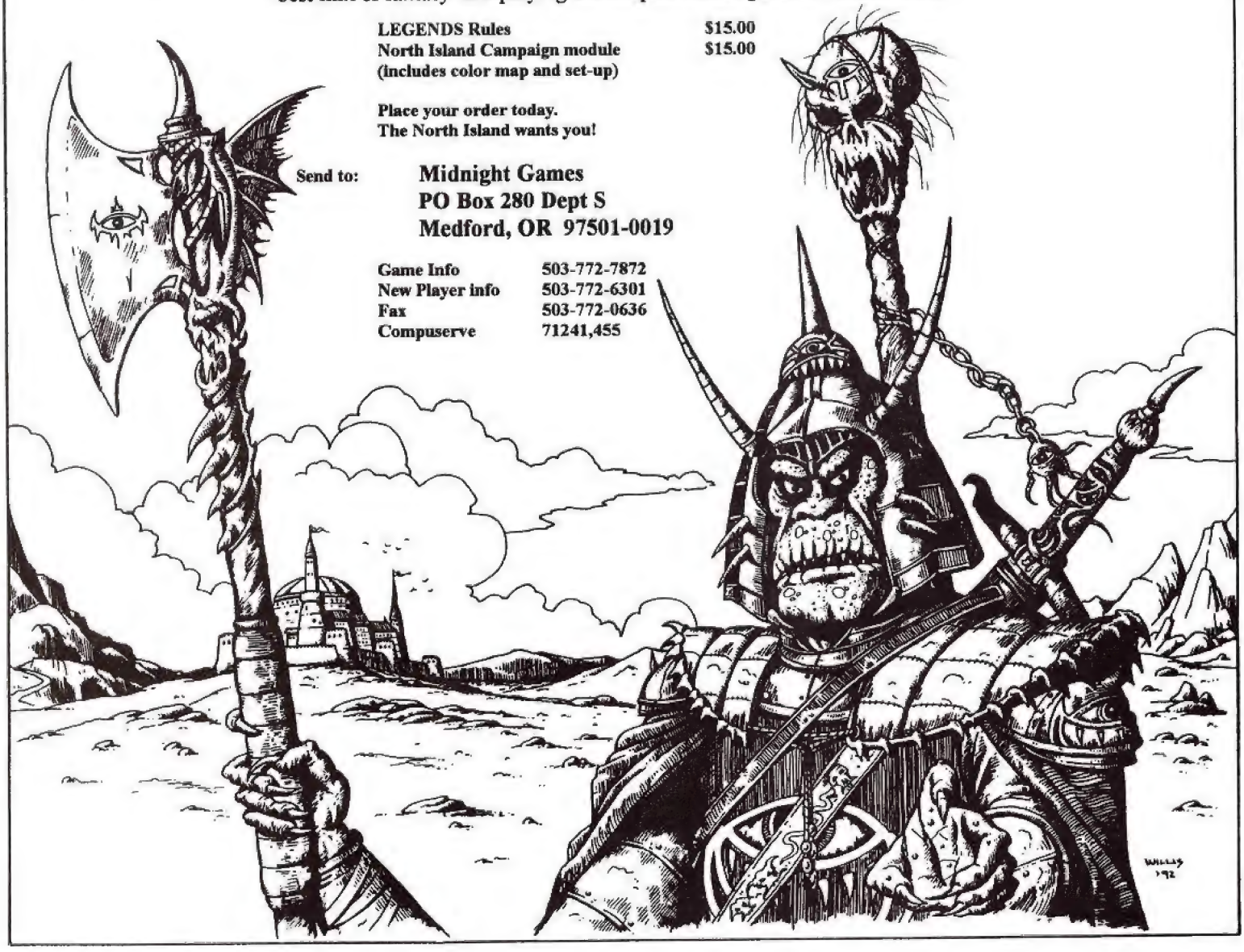

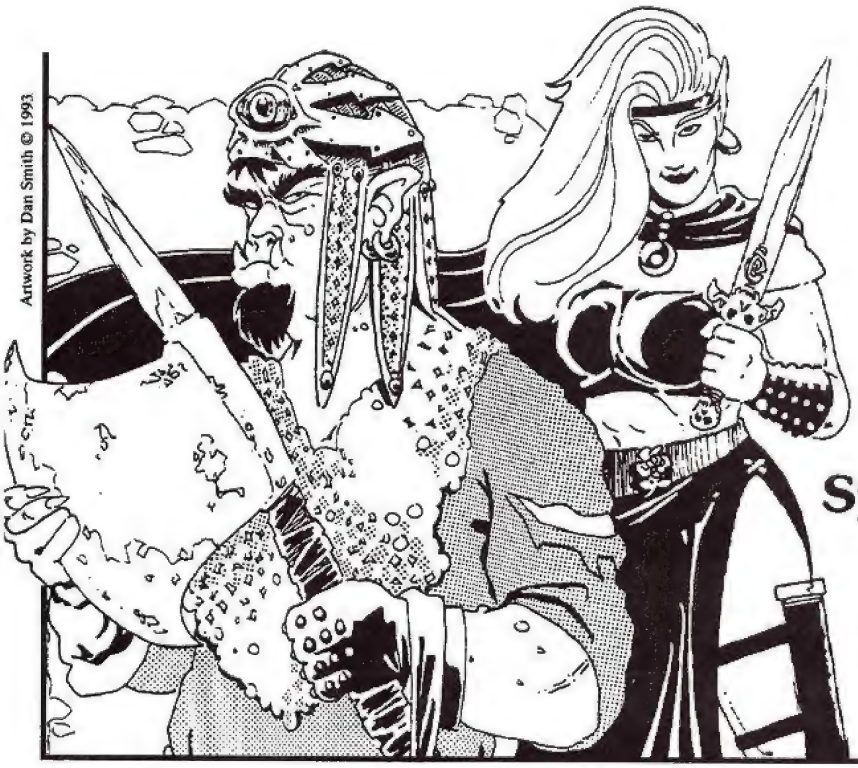

Post Marque

Special Play-By-Mail Section

Edited by Patrick Rodgers

Editorial

Virtually all writers like feedback. Apart from whatever meager financial rewards they receive, feedback and/or recognition are about the only things a writer can expect for his efforts. Feedback is a vehicle for self-improvement, too, since writers can learn from their readers what works and what doesn't. Feedback also tells a writer if he's keeping his readers happy.

Yes, this is leading up to something. I'd like to encourage Shadis readers to give us more feedback on the Post Marque section. We've gotten response from those who are already a part of the Postal Gaming community (we could always use more), but we want to hear what non-PBM gamers think of our section. Do you find it a useful window into another vista of gaming? Potentially useful, but poorly written? Too short? Too long? A total waste of time?

We'd like to hear from you, especially if you have any suggestions for improvements that you'd like to see.

John Hainly of **JFH Games** wanted to respond to last issue's article, "Welcome to PBM Gaming." In reference to our comments about rulebooks that do not provide specific information about all aspects of the game, John says "our rulebook doesn't leave you guessing about anything. Combat factors, to-hit rolls, chance of destruction - we give you all the information you need." He even sent us a rulebook to prove it! As John says, World War IV (which is also moderated by High Point Games) features a large variety of units and options, all of which are completely detailed in the rulebook. Look for a review of World War IV in a future issue of Post Marque.

One question that I did receive was whether Post Marque was a one-man operation. The question stemmed from the fact that, except for a capsule review by Trey Stone, the entire column in issue no.# 9 was written by myself. The answer is a resounding "no!" Before we could attract quality writers, and arouse the interest of the PBM moderators, we needed to have Post Marque "in operation," to demonstrate our continued commitment to the PBM community. Post Marque is not a "once off," but a regular feature of Shadis that is here to stay. I hope our presence at **AndCon** helped reinforce this.

Thus, this issue, we have more from Trey Stone, as well as a piece by Mike Wincek. Future issues will contain more articles from Trey and Mike, as well as a review of **Delenda est Carthago** from PBM veteran Bob Bost, a look at Quest from Shadis Magazine's John Zinser, a PBM first-timer's perspective on Middle Earth from Heidi Wolters, a review of Quest of The Great Jewels by Vickie Lloyd, and much more.

Unsolicited submissions are welcome. Those wishing to be considered as staff writers should send a sample of their writing, along with a description of their PBM experiences & preferences.

Finally, Post Marque has joined the rest of the Shadis family and gotten "wired." Post Marque can be Emailed on America Online at "ShadisEast," or via internet as Shadiseast@aol.com
I look forward to hearing from you! ❑

Patrick Rodgers
October, 1993

OUT TIME DAYS

Out Time Days is a Play-By-Mail game of life on a strange world. Emphasizing role playing and inter-player communication, **OTD** is a game for those who like to join with other players around the world in figuring out puzzles, creating working economies, exploring large sections of worlds, undertaking or tracking criminal activities, or fielding capable armies. The worlds explored are living, vibrant locales that will change through your character's actions.

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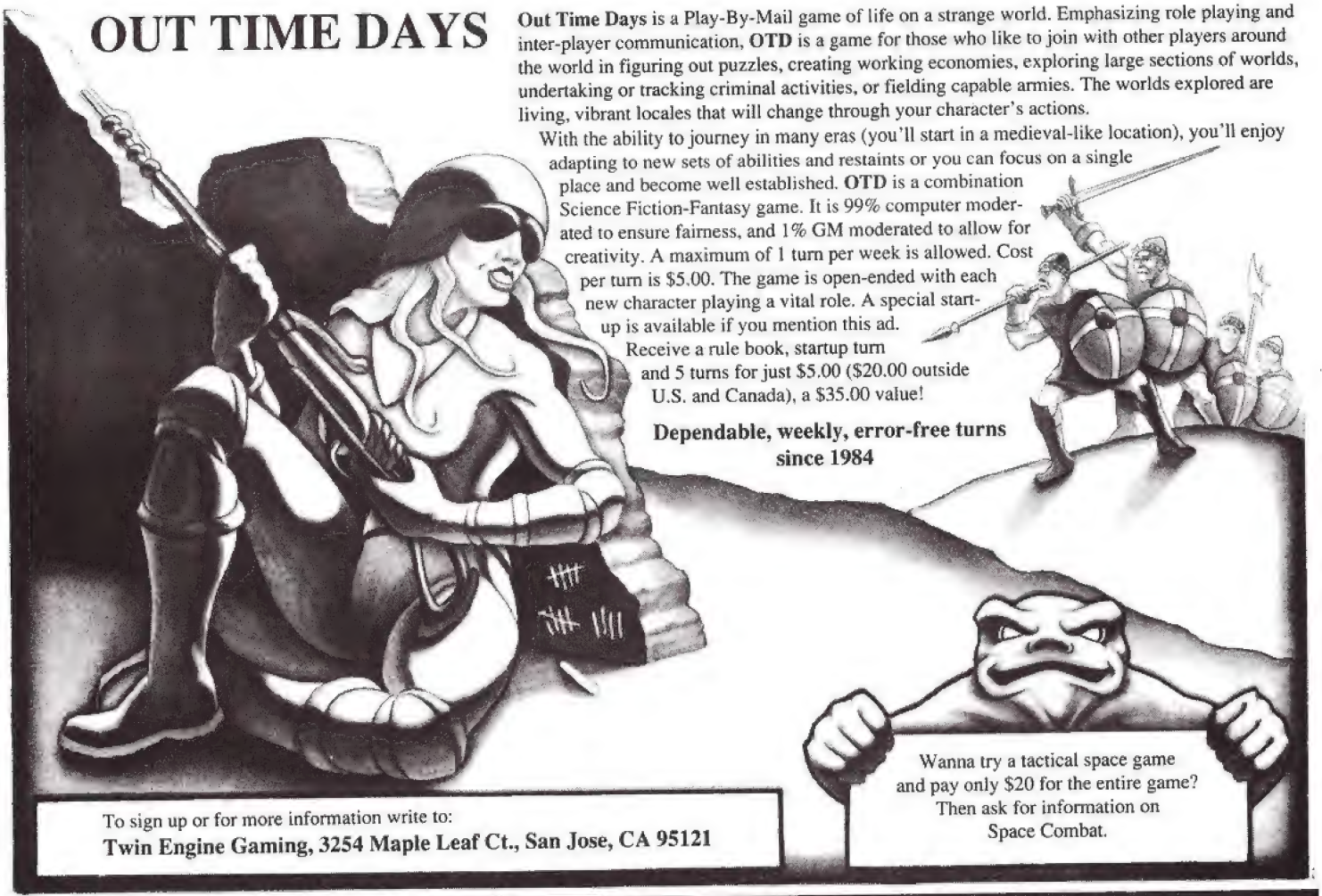

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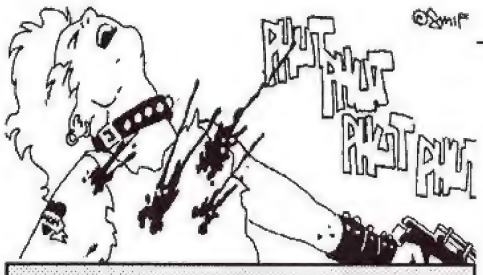

Welcome to Play-by-mail Gaming

The postal gaming industry has existed for over twenty years. At present, there are over 300 games in operation in the United States alone. From 2 to 2,000 players participate in each game. When a player joins a game, the person or company who moderates the game will inform the player of the nature of his starting position. The player then decides on a course of action, and mails his response back to the moderator. The moderator collects all of the responses from the players, processes them, and sends all players a new status report. This process (called a "turn") is then repeated.

There are many different categories of PBM games, covering many genres. Most are computer moderated, which means that the moderator takes the players' input and enters it into a computer. The impartial computer performs all calculations and determines the results of the players' actions, and then prints out a new status report for all players. Players need not have a computer to participate, nor do they need to know "computer language."

Some games end when a predetermined set of conditions has been met, e.g. when the Germans capture Paris, or when someone has found the Sword of Carnage. These games are called "closed-ended" games. Other games, called "open-ended" games, have no set ending, like traditional face-to-face RPGs. There are many great victories and losses, but the game never ends.

The fee charged by a moderator for one turn (sending in one set of orders and receiving one status report) range from under a dollar to over twenty dollars. The average price per turn is currently between four and five dollars. This may seem steep to newcomers, but compare the cost of a PBM turn, which can bring hours of enjoyment on a regular basis, to a movie ticket, or similar entertainment.

Many gamers who insist that they don't like PBM gaming have never actually tried it. There are many companies who offer no-obligation, no-cost rulebooks and/or turns. With so little to risk, we hope all of our readers will try at least one PBM game. ❑

Ship Ahoy!

NEW PBM GAMES SPOTTED

This is the section of Post Marque where we will be examining new PBM games. These are only overviews, based solely on promotional materials received from PBM companies (usually a rulebook; occasionally a sample setup). These overviews should not be construed as endorsements or complete reviews.

"Not just another bloody gladiatorial combat game..." So says Fractal Dimensions of their award-winning debut game, "A Duel of A Different Color." Players take on the role of instructors at Catadu university, in charge of a class of five students. The instructors try to guide students through various examinations (combats), with the eventual goal being graduation. The students begin as Hues, and move through the ranks of Tint, Shade, Tone, Pigment, and Color, before eventually graduating. Each student has a number of characteristics that define him, including race, gender, height, weight, age, three cosmetic features, personality traits, and Color. All of these are selected by the player. Color is not indicative of the student's appearance; rather, Color indicates the color of the school of magic that the student is devoted to. Green, for example, is the school of Plant magic, and most of the spells involve plants (e.g. Berries of Wit, Wall of Wood, etc.) Examinations consist of ten rounds. During each round, a student casts one spell at his opponent, and one spell to attempt to gain control over the five Crystals of Nuvaw. A spell cast successfully on a crystal will bring it under the student's control. If the crystal was already under his opponent's control, then it becomes uncontrolled again. If at any point in the match, one student controls three of the five crystals, he has passed the examination. If either of the students become exhausted (or have the misfortune to die) then their opponent is declared the victor. Combat strategy in Duel contains a useful feature called "emotion level." This feature allows an instructor to recommend two strategies per combat round: one that is usually activated when the student is performing well, and one that is usually activated when the student is performing poorly. The most immediately obvious application of this feature is to have an offensive spell ready if the student is winning, and a defensive or healing spell ready if the student is losing.

Rather than the typical "John Doe attacks abdomen. John Doe hits!" format, Duel turn output is presented in plain English. The text is well-written and reads like a short story. Examiner's

notes, presented in parentheses, discuss the status of both students in game turns.

The rulebook is well-produced, well-written, and pleasant to look at. It is more than complete, featuring many examples, samples, an index, and even a map of Catadu University. The only flaw is that the rulebooks are not bound and thus can be difficult to manage at times. Rules, setup, and two turns are $13; subsequent turns are $5.00 and consist of five examinations (i.e. one combat for each of the instructor's students).

More information on A Duel of a Different Color is available from Fractal Dimensions, 17-29 Main St., Suite 316, Cortland NY 13045.

Flying Buffalo seeks a vote of confidence for its new game "Election Year." This game it billed as an introductory-level PBM, and lasts only six turns. Ten players campaign, fund-raise, and photo-op their way to the primaries, and (if successful) right to the Oval Office. The rules are sparse (only 2 1/2 sides of paper) but cover everything necessary to play. At press time, FBI was offering one game of Election Year totally free of charge to anyone who has not played any of their games (those who have gamed with FBI pay $25 for the whole game). For further information, contact Flying Buffalo Inc., PO Box 1467, Scottsdale AZ 85252-1467.

Devotees of tactical ground combat can't stop talking about **Centurion**, the debut game from Fantasy Workshop. Based on the FASA product of the same name, Centurion pits Terran Overlord Government players against Commonwealth and Renegade legions as they struggle for planetary domination. Team play is essential to victory; this game is NOT recommended for "hermit" players. The 95-page rulebook covers every aspect thoroughly and clearly, with the possible exception of how enemy units are spotted. Each turn features highly detailed printouts, including vehicle record sheets for each surviving vehicle under the player's control, location and heading of all known units, reports on combat and artillery fire, and more. An 11x17 laser-printed color map also accompanies each turn.

The game is open-ended, but consists of many individual scenarios that have definite victory conditions.

At press time, Fantasy Workshop was experiencing delays due to a recent move to Irving, TX, although this is believed to be only temporary. Those desiring more information on Centurion may contact Fantasy Workshop, PO Box 167506, Irving TX 75016-7506.

HCS Games is bringing the Dark Ages to America. Under a recent licensing agreement, the UK game "Dark Age" is now being offered in America. The game is a closed-ended, medieval game of conquest. Twelve players accumulate victory points by controlling as many population units as they can. Judging from the 13 page rulebook, the game is of medium complexity, containing more options than the standard medieval land-grab game, but none that are excessively complicated. A helpful Quick Reference and Table of Actions are included. Setup and first three turns are $10; subsequent turns are $4.00 each.

The other recent entry from HCS is Stellar Realms. Ten players vie for control of 100 star systems, contained in 512 sectors. Any player controlling 50 or more systems for three consecutive turns wins the game. Turn input is exceptionally easy; each fleet has the option to move, attack, defend, or support another unit. The game world consists of eight 8x8 grids, creating a 3-dimensional environment. Each player begins with one fleet and one system, and has the opportunity to build new fleets every third turn.

The 10-page rule book details everything necessary to play the game, which appears simple and straightforward. Setup and first four turns are $4.00; subsequent turns are $4.00 each. For more information about Dark Age or Stellar Realms, contact HCS Games, 89 Lakeview Terrace, Binghamton NY 13904. ❑

STELLAR REALMS

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Rulebook - $3.00
Turn fee - $4.00
Startup and first 4 turns - $10.00

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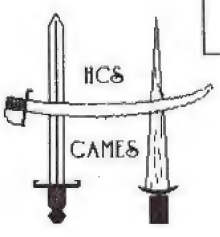
Also available - GLORY II, the game of the American Civil War



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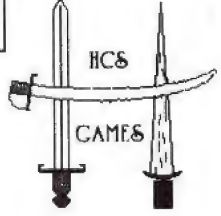

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The Bloody Blade

A PREVIEW

by Mike Wincek

"With everyone healed, the party moves on. Everyone with sixth sense realizes the party will need everything it has to survive the next few hours. Aurora realizes the potion of True Seeing will last all turn, so she takes a swig. The party re-enters the room of dung. Aurora now sees an exit on the far wall which was previously hidden by an illusion of a brick wall. Everyone carefully makes their way across the room and to the hidden exit. When at the door, Aurora notices a very powerful glyph in front of the door. Caladil recognizes the glyph as a mark of evil. Any creature other than evil entering the opening could die on the spot! The Captain moves to the front and places his hand on the glyph...."

Don't you just hate when some one stops right at the exciting point in the story? I know I do, but I did get your attention, right? Good, because I'd like to tell you of a new PBM game that is just hitting the market now. It's called, "The Bloody Blade," and it's run by Damien Games. As you can tell from the story above (which was part of my last turn), this game takes place in a fantasy setting. Some people have made the statement that PBM games do not make good role-playing games. Well, this game blows that theory right out of the water! "The Bloody Blade" was designed with one purpose in mind: to be a fantasy RPG. The game is just coming out of playtest, and I would say it's a darn good FRPG too!

Getting down to the nuts and bolts of the game, you get to completely design your own character, down to the point of adjusting the character's stats. There are eight stats that characters use in TBB: Strength, Constitution, Bravery, Agility, Dexterity, Intelligence, Quickness, and Charisma. These stats will have certain maximums that cannot be exceeded, depending on which race you choose for your character. Racial types to choose from range from the ever-popular human, to the rare but exotic lizardman.

The next step is to pick a character class, or profession. Originally there were just four classes to choose from, but that number has already been expanded to fourteen! For all of you who like to play magic-users, you will not be disappointed by the selections.

Now that you have your basic character set up, you need to give him some skills, equipment, or perhaps an advantage or two. "What are advantages?" you ask. Something that makes this game a bit more unique than the standard. You can purchase advantages for your character such as Ambidexterity, Peripheral Vision, Sixth Sense, etc. Be warned, though, that these can only be purchased when the character is first created.

What's left? Oh yes, you might want to give your new friend a name!

Now on to what is really important, playing the game. Your character starts out in the city of Thievesville. From the looks of the map, this is a BIG city. Beyond the city is the rest of the world. Currently, no one has tried to explore outside the city. On your first few turns, it's wise to scout out different parts of the city while having a chance encounter or two. After getting a feel for the city, it's entirely up to you what you do next.

"So," you ask, "exactly what am I allowed to do in this game?" The answer is simple: anything. There are no orders or order numbers. Each turn, your character can do one main action and three secondary actions. The main action should take your character most of a day to complete, while a secondary action would take about a half an hour or so. This is what makes the game good for role-playing. For example, my character happened to find a secret entrance to the sewers. Instead of heading down there by myself, I went to the adventurer's guild. Here I teamed up with several other characters, and into the sewer we went! Our trip into the sewers allowed us to build up experience points and sharpen our skills (not to mention getting soundly thrashed. Ouch!)

Since then we have gone our separate ways, each wanting to do something different. Being a city-type character, I currently have my eye on "acquiring" a house in the nice part of town. Then, after that, who knows? Maybe a seat in the Royal Castle.

The GM for "The Bloody Blade" is Robert Harris. I have talked with him several times about his games. He takes great pride in his products, and really puts quite an effort in writing turns. At the price of only $3.00 a turn, this game is well worth it. If you enjoy RPGs that allow you to take complete control of your character's situation, try "The Bloody Blade." Your character will thank you for it!

For further information, contact: Damien Games 1209 Park Hill Cr. Knoxville, TN 37909 ❑

Freak Out

A CAPSULE REVIEW

by Patrick M. Rodgers

The premise of Freak Out! is delightful - twenty players enter a crowded shopping mall and try to reduce everything to its component molecules.

There are only three orders in the game: **Move** (which is used to navigate between the 49 stores in the mall), **Destroy** (to cause property damage), and **Kill** (self explanatory).

Fifteen Action Points are available each turn, with each action requiring an average of 3 - 6 Points.

The rules consist of both sides of a single sheet of paper, but they are quite complete. Freak Out! is intended as an introductory PBM, and while experienced players may enjoy the twisted humor, they may lose interest in the simple 20-turn game before it ends.

One cautionary note: the humor in the game is (as one would expect) demented, and may offend "politically correct" players. The moderator requires all players to be at least 17 years of age.

Moving into store #48 and issuing a Kill and Destroy order could produce the following text:

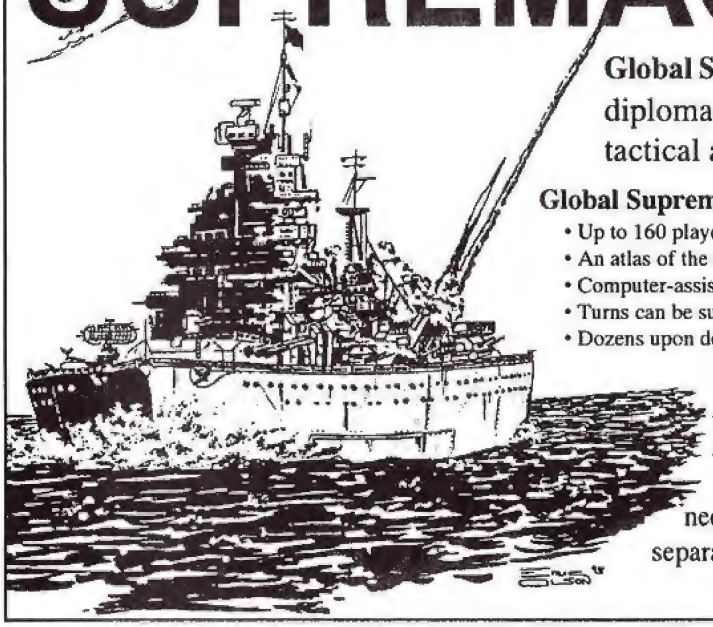
Victor's Secret - Your pace is slowed as you enter this strange boutique. The walls are covered in lace and satin, and the shelves hold an interesting collection of large teddies and slips. But also, a fine assortment of power tools can be found in the corner. In the back of the store, a large bearded man is modeling an emerald teddy for two lumberjacks.

Grabbing a DD bra and filling it with nails, you begin to whirl the sling above your head. "A tisket, a tasket...wait a minute, what the hell is a tasket? Er, I mean, a brisket, a brasket, who's gonna need a casket? Is it him? Is it her? When I give it a whirl!" You release the double barrel weapon with a shout, but your aim sucks! Some dorky looking guy with a cellular phone who is walking by the store manages to catch several of the nails in the face. Well, to hell with it anyway, he looked like a jerk!

Having a chainsaw in close proximity causes a smile to creep across your face. Giving it a rip, you raise it high in the air and rev it loudly. Then you dramatically cut the engine and shout: "QUACK!" You start the chainsaw again and proceed to cut all of the heads off the mannequins. "QUACK!! QUACK!!"

Cost for setup, rules, full-color map, and first turn is $5.00. Turns thereafter are $2.00 each. Four players signing up together receive their last four turns free of charge. To play, contact Guy M. Games, PO Box 3388, Carbondale IL 62902. ❑

GLOBAL SUPREMACY



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Initial set-up for Global Supremacy if FREE and includes all necessary materials. The rule book is $15.00, and can be purchased separately. Turns are $3.50 each. The average monthly turn costs are $30.

Hyperplatoon:

A Private Little War

by Trey Stone

Hovertank 09 of the merc company known as the Hooter Patrol screamed along at top speed. They had single-handedly destroyed two enemy tanks and an enemy powered missile trooper before it could be successfully deployed against the Hooter Patrol. Now the tank had fired on an Electronic Warfare Vehicle, wounding it. The stricken vehicle limped for cover behind the high hills it had been sitting in.

"Hot damn, an ELW!" exclaimed Gunnery Sergeant Mike McRight. "Ol' Captain is going to owe us major bonuses. With that ELW smoked by us, along with those other kills, we'll have the unit record. Don't spare the horses, Ferro."

Spc. Ferro, the driver, narrowed her cobalt eyes as she traded glances between the HUD and the main viewscreen. She saw the fleeing ELW darting between the hill peaks; no doubt motivated by the air strike that just strafed him, as well as the swiftly approaching Hooter Patrol Tank. Her slender, strong hands eased back on the acceleration ever so slightly to avoid an overheat in the power plant.

Pvt. Shore, on the guns, tapped on McRight's shoulder. "Skipper, a fleeing suit on our six. He's caught between us and their arty. He's running like a rabbit in the open, making a break for the trees. Man, look at him jump! You'd think the Grim Reaper himself was chasing him."

McRight said, "He is. Watch this." He shooed Shore off the weapons controls and rotated the turret to the rear. The infantryman could now be seen in the target scope, his jump jets whooshing as he ran for all he was worth. Smiling, McRight switched to shells, selecting AP rounds. Locked on target, he pressed the firing stud. There was a bang with little recoil, and a click as another shell was automatically loaded into the breach. In the target scope, the infantryman had suddenly become an airy poof of red spray and titanium shavings.

Chuckling, McRight high-fived Shore and said to Ferro, "Red, we greased a Trooper-B. Should be worth a bit more bonus." Red gave a thumbs up as she prepared to move into the valley between the hill peaks.

McRight rotated the turret to the forward position, searching for the ELW. "Yep, the Captain knows it, and so do I. This little war is just about over...."

At Ease!

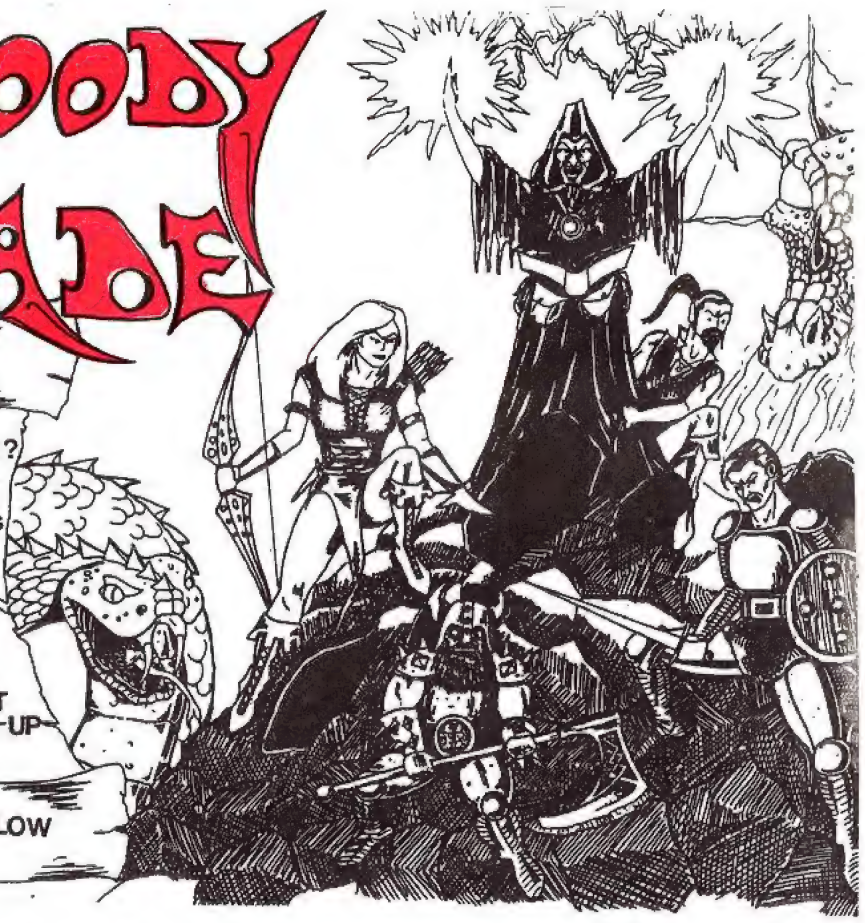
The preceding scene is based on Chris Carter's action-filled Hyperplatoon, the first release from his new PBM firm, Solaris Games. It features fast-moving armored warfare in the battlefields of the future, and is one of a small handful of PBMs on the market that focus on tactical ground combat, and armored warfare in particular. Notable others include Friendly Fire Games' Tracks, a World War II scenario, and Fantasy Workshop's Centurion, based on the FASA boardgame of the same name. It is a field crying for games, and Hyperplatoon is a welcome addition to the field.

Head 'em up, Move 'em out!

When HP goes fully commercial, there will eventually be several variants, such as multi-player games, campaigns, etc. But at present, in the playtest version, it is played with only two players. A definite victory goal is set, usually a set terrain objective to occupy ("take the hill, drill!"), and a set number of casualties to score on the enemy.

Each game is played on a different map, crisply laser printed and made to look like a military topographical map. All sorts of terrain can be presented, such as flatlands, forests, hills, mountains, rough areas, lakes, rivers, beaches, and roads. No two are ever the same, and each has its own individual challenge. You are to look over map and determine your initial deployment within the perimeters provided. Your initial deployment will greatly affect the coming battle.

The BLOODY BLADE



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ARMAGEDDON'S AFTERMATH

Enemy on our Twelve!

After your deployment, your troops head out to find and destroy those of your enemy. There are quite an interesting variety of these troops, and their proper use is essential to your success.

First are your infantry. Same thing they always have been, footslogging mud soldiers. It's just that these mud soldiers are men outfitted in powered combat suits, each designed and trained for different missions. They include:

Scouts: Fast, lightly armored troopers. They have a light laser rifle, and heightened sensor capability. Each one carries a remote probe, and are the only unit that can "designate" a target (paint a target with a laser for the purpose of targeting artillery).

Basic Troopers: Average ground pounder. Carries a light laser rifle and has average armor.

Heavy Trooper: Heavier armor, heavier laser rifle, with a more powerful power plant and thruster unit to compensate for the added weight.

Cannon Trooper: Basic trooper with a laser cannon instead of a rifle.

Missile Trooper: Heavy trooper equipped with an equipment pack to allow transport of four Mat-B anti-armor missiles. When all missiles are fired, this unit operates as a heavy trooper.

Tanks: The beasts of the battlefield, these armored hulks are essential to victory. Main armament is the 200mm main gun, capable of firing laser bolts, or firing anti-tank or anti-personnel rounds. They can also fire shells indirectly (they are also artillery). Fast, even faster on roads, they are scary, especially if a bunch of enemy tanks are headed at you full speed, and most of yours have been destroyed.

Finally, there are your support vehicles. Mounted in a chassis similar to the tank, they possess the laser cannon, but nothing else. However, they are tremendously important.

ELW Vehicle: Your electronic warfare support vehicle. This vehicle provides a myriad of electronic abilities, including jamming, spying, counterjamming, and more. It also provides counterbattery data. Lose it, and you lose all defense against enemy EW, and your counterbattery ability will be sharply reduced.

HQ Vehicle: Your seat of command, presumably where the company commander is running the show. Allows communication, and is the main system with the computerized maps. Also calls in air support. If you lose it, all of the above is severely reduced, or completely lost.
Also has a remote probe.

All vehicles and units are defined by a set of ratings in different areas: Armor, Sensors, Power Plant, Thrusters, and Communications. These ratings can be reduced when damage is sustained.

All units except the support vehicles possess overthrust capability. Use it sparingly, as excessive use can result in damage.

Lights Out!

In summary, Hyperplatoon looks to be a GREAT addition to the tactical ground combat field. It features FAST action and intense combat, and is a welcome challenge to any tactical combat fan.

Hyperplatoon is in playtest at present, however, and is subject to the same hiccups that any playtest is. Set-up is $7.00, and subsequent turns are $2.50, but these are the playtest rates, and could increase after the playtest concludes.

Chris, the GM, is friendly, and gratefully welcomes player input. He shows a great talent for military simulations, and HP, with its Army-style maps and unit representations, lends itself well to this. He works in the computer field, and one of his projects involves programming for a field artillery support computer.

If this sounds like your bag, and you aren't afraid to possibly face the Hooter Patrol, write to Chris Carter, Solaris Games, 412-3 Wallen Hills Drive, Fort Wayne, IN 46825. ❑

Quest of the Great Jewels

*In **Quest of the Great Jewels**, choose to be one of four races: The Azoni, builders of great citadels; the Quntag, rulers of vast empires; the Rilris, hoarders of great wealth, or the Slenth, destroyers and ravagers of the land. Begin as the ruler of a single province and send your armies out to fulfill your race's destiny. Quest is a fantasy wargame combining elements of strategy and tactics with a healthy dose of magic. Over 90 magical talismans abound in the game, each granting its owner the ability to bend the rules in some way.*

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BITS N' PIECES

Rumors, New Products, Etc.

SHADIS

Hits the Convention Trail

The SHADIS staff has been busy the last two months with the launching of our new promotional campaign.

We will continue to be hitting the convention trail throughout 1994 with our Game Demo Teams and promotional give-aways.

GENCON REPORT

As promised, the SHADIS staff made their first major convention appearance with a bang. Over 8,000 issues were given away to enthusiastic gamers at GENCON in Milwaulkee WI, August 1993.

Toward the end of the con I was amazed to see copies of SHADIS virtually everywhere I went. Many thanks to everyone who made our coming out party a big success.

The biggest thrill of all was the outpouring of support from the game companies who welcomed the appearance of an independent gaming magazine. Special mention goes to Kevin Seimbeida and the rest of the Palladium staff for assistance in handing out magazines when the SHADIS booth was blocked by hordes of Star Trek fans who turned out for the apperance of George Takei.

Highlights of the con for the staff was getting game-celebrities autographs on the SHADIS booth sign. (O.K. - we pretty much looked like tourists on Hollywood Blvd). Other then B.A. Felton's stupid stunt, the convention was a blast and we have vowed to return next year.

GATEWAY REPORT

After the rigors of GENCON, the SHADIS staff headed almost immediately to Los Angeles for Gateway 93 where another 1,500 issues of SHADIS were given away. We enjoyed GATEWAY because we were finally able to relax and leave the confines of our booth and venture out among the gamers.

Highlights for the staff was a hilarious session of Lost Souls ran by TSR's own Lester Smith. Our apologies to Lester for turning a well prepared adventure into an episode of the Three Stooges.

Another highlight was the cute redhead selling buttons at one of the booths - but that's another story.

Perhaps the biggest news at GATEWAY was Magic-Fever caused by WOTC's new card game. (See our feature review for more details.) I don't think I've ever seen a game generate so much response so quickly. The most often heard comment of the con was "Why didn't I think of that?."

ANDCON REPORT

To demonstrate our support for the PBM industry, we sent Patrick Rodgers, our PBM editor to ANDCON in Ohio to give away even more issues of SHADIS.

Patrick wrote up a wonderful report , complete with picutres but space constraints forced us to cut it. (Sorry, Patrick).

Patrick had a wonderful time playing White Wolf's Vampire in which he was reportedly turned into a Ken Doll. We would have gotten more details - but we were afraid to ask.

Across the Country in 30 Days

For those of you interested, our editor Jolly was dragged screaming from South Carolina to join his partners in sunny California between issues. Jolly left home for GENCON and from there drove directly to California to move into the new Shadis office. Apparently Jolly and his traveling partner John Zinser had some harrowing adventures in Arizona, but we've yet to pry out any details. We know it has something to do with a tatooed man and a crazed hitchhiker. More details as they come in.

JOE GENERO FOUND!!

Can it be?? Joe Genero found alive and well?? Yes it's true! The artist responsible for the Joe Genero comic strip was located at GENCON. A bewildered Jason A. Holmgren was tracked down at GENCON and forced into agreeing to provide more Joe Genero strips. Jason was a little surprised that he had a loyal following among SHADIS readers and that a massive search had been underway for him over the last 18 months.

After Jason was tackled to the ground and explained the situation he commented, "What a relief! I thought this had something to do with Benny the Shark and that chorus girl."

Look for the further adventures of Joe here in SHADIS.

Now at last, you can take down those wanted posters and cut the yellow ribbons off the old oak tree. (sniff).

A 'BRIGHT FUTURE' FOR RUNAWAY GRAPHICS!

Runaway Graphics has been purchased by Brass Ring Publications. The creative staff of Runaway, responsible for such comics as "BRIGHT FUTURE" has stayed on with the company and has already promised to continue the comic series for SHADIS.

AND IN THIS CORNER...

Whit Publications has acquired the gaming rights for the World Wrestling Federation. Pre-sales are reportedly brisk and a full line of supporting products, including miniatures are in the works.

SHADIS STAFF CONDEMNS PRANK

Well, B.A. Felton did it again. Invited to GENCON to help man the SHADIS booth, B.A. managed to slip away from his escorts and pull another childish stunt which nearly resulted in the banishment of SHADIS from all future conventions. It appears B.A. donned himself in some fish-net stockings and red lingerie and climbed the TSR castle. While frantic security guards tried to talk him down from his lofty perch, B.A. managed to sing four verses of *"When I think about You"* complete with hand gestures. SHADIS apologizes for his outrageous prank and we promise to keep B.A. under proper wraps in the future.

OVERLEAF: Photo Gallery of the 1993 SHADIS Convention Tour

SKYDIVE
Ladies

The Market Platz

The MARKET PLATZ is a meeting place where readers pass along information, barter, trade and gossip. Readers are invited to place classified ads, announce group meetings, seek out other players etc.

Subscribers may place classified ads free of charge with a limit of one ad per issue and a maximum of 25 words. Non-subscribers can place ads for 25¢ per word with a limit of 25 words.

Convention announcements, group meetings and public service notices can be placed free of charge.

Ads will be placed on a first-come-first-serve basis with Subscribers having priority.

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SHAD SCREWED UP!
Last issue Shad was given one task - laying out our back issue ad. He screwed up and listed the wrong address. If you ordered back issues from the South Carolina Address and haven't received your order, please contact us at our California address. Sorry for the inconvience. Shad has been reprimanded and apologizes

The Bannister League hereby waives tax-collection for those states east of the Mississipi River. I am doing this merely to impress Cindy in Indianapolis. And as for you Drexel - quit sending my mother flowers

Help - I'm chained to a keyboard in California and they won't release me! - The Editor

Hedley,
Operation Cornfield was a success. Next assignment is pending. Please standby.
Dredger

Dear Gamers,
I am sorry for climbing the castle at GENCON and embarassing the SHADIS staff.
B.A. Felton

Muffin
Sure do miss you and my Group Therapy. Dance in the rain for me sometime - OK?
Pooh

Terak
I fly to Myrtle Beach on November 8. So begins the gathering.
Sarak

Jorn
Don't Worry, I have a plan.
A.T.

Raylor
When are you coming. How we miss your whining.
Z

Patrick
Hope those belly-dancing classes are keeping you off the street at night.
John

Nichole
What can you say to a girl with a sword and her own armor?
Intimidated

Jenny & Kathy
Talsiman will never be the same. Thanks for a great game. Sorry about the cheese dip on the dice.
Jolly

City of Bell Cops?
Is that like the phone police?

ORGANIZATIONS

Have you heard the senseless accusations?

"Gaming is Satanic",
"Gaming causes drug & alcohol abuse"
"Gaming causes violent crime"
"Gamers are a secret cult which dabbles in the occult and make unholy sacrifices"?

WE SAY IT'S A BUNCH OF HOOEY!

If you are tired of right-wing fundamentalist disinformation slandering you and your hobby, maybe it's time you joined CARP-Ga.

The Committee for the Advancement of Role Playing -Games is an international nonprofit organization of gamers like you who want to advocate the hobby to the public as fun, healthy family entertainment.

SAY NO TO CENSORSHIP!!

There are many organizations working hard to outlaw RPGs, live role-play, paintball games, video games and other innocuous hobbies. Their aim is to control the "acceptable" forms of entertainment in the world, and consequently, you!

We need your help; we need researchers, talented individuals, and professionals (such as police, educators, clergy, and doctors) to assist us in our efforts. We need *YOU*. For more information, please send 52¢ US postage or an IRC for our free information kit & application for membership; write to:

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(903) 583-3218 (Hrs 9-5 Central)

THE MARKET PLATZ IS HERE TO SERVE OUR READERS! IF YOU HAVE ANY SUGGESTIONS ON HOW WE CAN BETTER SERVE YOU, LET ME KNOW

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Promote your game store. SHADIS will be expanding it's Game Store Directory. Listings cost $50.00 for three issues. Each listing will measure 1 3/4" x 3/4". Contact John Zinser at (909) 597-6906 for further information.

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45 Fairfield Hebden Bridge
West Yorks UK 4X7 6JD
Mega *Traveller fanzine*

SILVER GRIFFIN
P.O. Box 1751
St. Paul MN 55101
Covers all RPGS.

SILVER SWORDS & SORCERY
11685 SR 691 Nelsonville OH 45764
Fantasy RPGs

SOUTHERN AURORA
7 Rupert Court
Thomastown, Melbourne
Victoria, Australia

SPACE GAMER-FANTASY GAMER
P.O. Box 11424
Burbank CA 91519-1424
Covers Freestyle RPG's

SPINWARD TIMES
823 Ponsard St. Brossard
Quebec Canada J4W 1W1
Mega Traveller fanzine

STARSHIPS STARPORTS & VEHICLES
3890 50th St.
San Diego CA 92105-3005
Mega Traveller fanzine

STARSONG
Route 2 Box 260-B
St. Matthews SC 29135
sci-fi/fantasy anthology

SWORD & BLASTER
2102-B Wexford Dr.
Norcross GA 30071
Fanzine of Atlanta Gaming clubs.

TMRGS
598 Thompson Station Rd.
Newark, DE 19711-7520
Space 1889 zine

VORTEXT
1066 28th St.
Oakland, CA 94608
Qrtly Games Magazine - Reviews

WARPfactor
SU 3213 Williams College
Williamstown MA 01267
Newsletter Mostly GURPS.

WHITE DWARF
3431-C Benson Ave
Baltimore, Maryland 21227-1072
Games Workshop - House Organ

WHITE WOLF
4598 Stonegate Industrial Bl.
Stone Mountian, GA 30083
House Organ - White Wolf Studios

WORLD BUILDER, THE
P.O. Box 576
Milton, WA 98354
a newsletter centered around world creation and fantasy settings.

RENEGADE RAGS
• addresses needed •
Here is a list of gaming rags, that for one reason or another we do not have addresses for. WE DO KNOW THEY EXIST! If you can help us with the addresses, please contact this magazine.

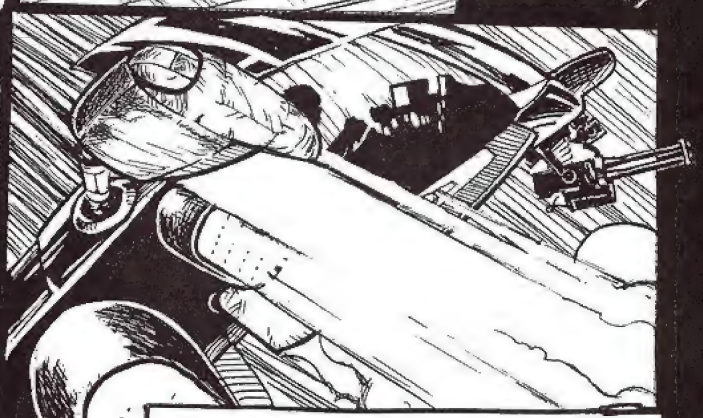
Amberzine
Banner Newsletter, The
Battleplan
Battle Technology
Boardgame Journal
Breakout
C3I
Command Post Quarterly
Courier
Empires, Eagles & Lions
Europa News
Future Wars
Gatekeeper
Grenadier
Harnlore
Historical Gamer
Infiniverse
Interface
Mecha Press
Megatraveller Journal
Military Illustrated
Miniature Wargames
Operations
Practical Wargamer
Protoculture Addicts
Savage & Soldier
Voyages
Wargamer
Wargames Illustrated

PLEASE MENTION SHADIS MAGAZINE WHEN REPLYING!

Part II

BRIGHT FUTURE

STORY - EDWIN MILLHIEM
ART - RAY LEDERER
LETTERS - JESSICA ALLEN



IT IS SAID THAT AT TIMES OF EXTREME DANGER, SOME PERSONS FIND A HIDDEN WELL OF STRENGTH DEEP IN THEIR BEING. GARY BERGENSON BECOMES A BELIEVER AS DEATH LOOMS AHEAD, WAITING TO REACH STONY FINGERS FORTH TO SEND HIM TO A FIERY DEATH.

THE REVERSE THRUST OF THE POLICE SHIP PRESSES HIM FORWARD IN THE STRAPS OF HIS SEAT. THE CONTROL STICK, ALMOST UNRESPONSIVE, MOVES JUST ENOUGH WITH HIS EFFORT TO STAY DISASTER.

OHHHHHH BABY, YOU GONNA CATCH US ALL BY YOURSELF? I DON'T THINK SO! ONE EXTRA DEAD COP AIN'T NOTHING. BYE BYE BABY...
OH JES—
WILL YOU JUST PAINT HER DANNY, WE... OH MY
OH BOY.

Continued Next Issue

THE ADVENTURES OF JOE GENERO THE AVERAGE MAN

WHO IS JOE?

JOE IS THE "AVERAGE" MAN. HIS "ATTRIBUTES" ARE AVERAGE. HIS ROLLS ARE AVERAGE.

HE IS THE UNSUNG HERO OF ROLE-PLAYING GAMES!

WHAT CHANCE DOES THIS EVERY DAY MAN HAVE IN THE WAKE OF CYBER-TECHNO-MAGIC USERS? IT DEPENDS ON WHAT RULES YOU USE...

THIS MONTH'S PULSE-POUNDING SPECTACLE:

JOE GETS BEAT UP! PART 2

Q: HOW MANY PUNCHES DOES IT TAKE TO KILL JOE?

(ALL ATTACKS ARE UNARMED PUNCH ATTACKS PRESUMED TO MAKE "TO HIT" ROLLS IF APPROPRIATE TO THAT SYSTEM)

CALL OF CTHULHU: 5 (ELAPSED TIME 0.83 MINUTES)
VAMPIRE: 7 (TIME- GAMEMASTER'S DISCRECTION)
AD&D: 13 (TIME - 13.0 MINUTES)
HERO SYSTEM: 30 (TIME 3 MINUTES)
GURPS™: 46 (TIME 0.77 MINUTES)
TRAVELLER NEW ERA: 48* (TIME 8.0 MINUTES)
SHADOW RUN 2ND ED: 144 (TIME 7.2 MINUTES)

* IF USING NPC "QUICK KILL" RULES, IT TAKES ONLY 12 PUNCHES TO KILL JOE!

(THESE ARE "MARK TWO" RESULTS, AND SHOULD BE CONSIDERED OFFICIAL. PREVIOUS NUMBERS ARE OBSOLETE, JUST LIKE YOUR 1ST EDITION GAMES.)

WHAT IF "MARTIAL ARTS" ARE INVOLVED?

IN MEKTON, JOE CAN PERFORM A MANEUVER CALLED THE "SPIN KICK". IN HTH COMBAT, IT HAS A 25% CHANCE OF INSTANTLY DECAPITATING ANOTHER JOE!

CALL OF CTHULHU: 4 (TIME: 40 SECONDS)
ASSUMING MARTIAL ARTS SKILL OF 25%

GURPS: 9 (TIME 9 SECONDS)
ASSUMING KARATE SKILL OF 15%

HERO SYSTEM: 9 (TIME 54 SECONDS)
ASSUMING MARTIAL STRIKE

IN GURPS, ANY HTH ATTACK DELIVERED BY JOE HAS A 193,802-TO-1 CHANCE OF INSTANTLY KILLING HIS OPPONENT, REGARDLESS OF ARMOR, SKILL, ETC.
(A CRITICAL HAD HIT THAT ACHIEVES A RESULT OF 3)

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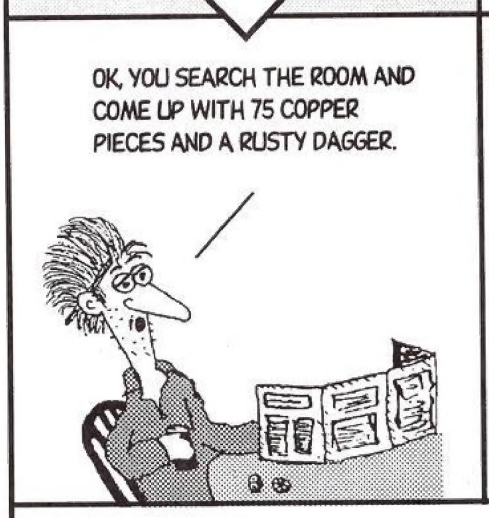
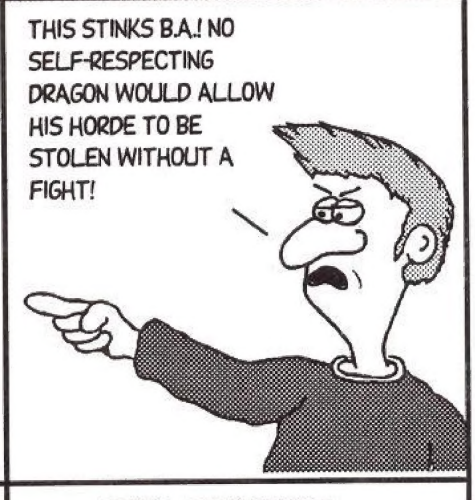
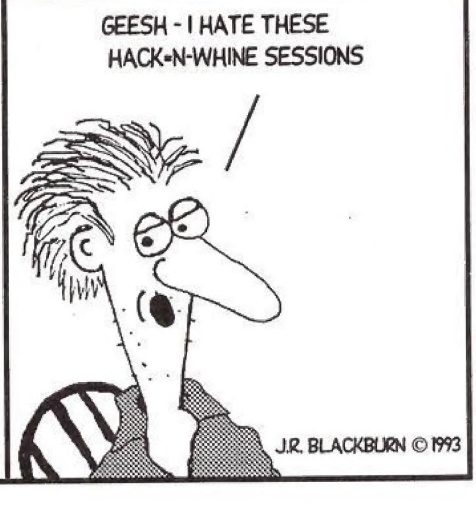
KNIGHTS OF THE DINNER TABLE







The MAGIC Primer
The Gathering

Lesson 2: The Battlefield

It's a fantasy card game

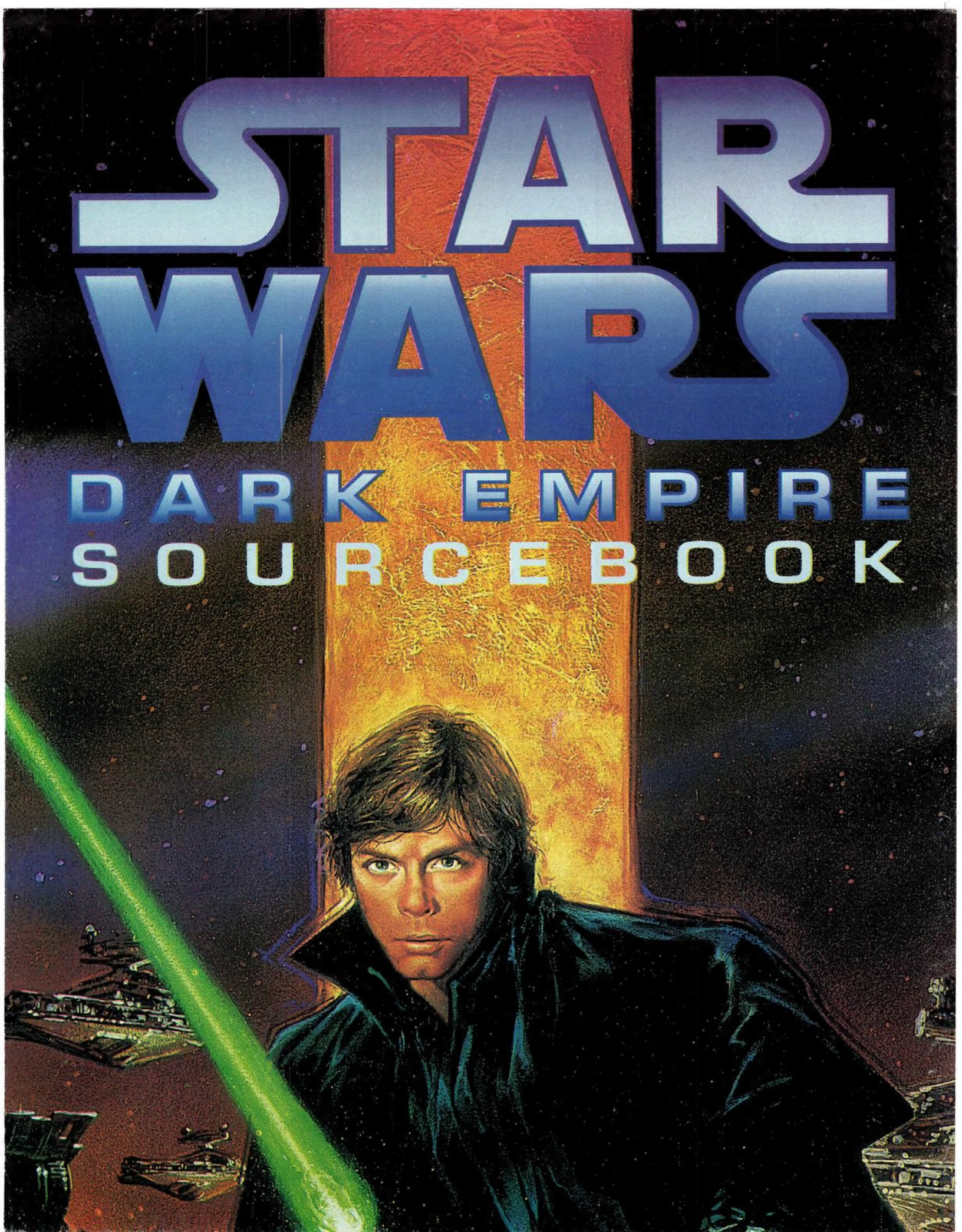
It's a collectable trading card set

It's *Magic: The Gathering*, the first in the **Deckmaster** series of collectable trading card games from Wizards of the Coast and Garfield Games. *Magic: The Gathering* is a fantasy game of epic proportions, featuring over 280 different cards. Some are fairly common, some uncommon, and some very rare. You'll have your own unique deck, but so will your opponent! Challenge your friends, build up a reputation, or participate in tournaments. Whatever you do, though, don't get complacent. There is always more to explore in *Magic: The Gathering*, and your opponents will never be defeated until you've taken their last life points.

THE CHOICE IS SIMPLE.

PO Box 707, Renton, WA 98057-0707, Phone: (206) 624-0933

Wizards of the Coast

STAR WARS

DARK EMPIRE SOURCEBOOK